ROMA

a guide to policy engagement and influence

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**Research
& Policy in
Development**

For over a decade, the **Research and Policy in Development** (RAPID) programme has occupied a unique place in ODI's range of expert teams through its transdisciplinary focus on the relationship between research, policy and practice. The programme investigates how research can result in evidence-informed policy-making. We use our insights to develop practical tools, skills and competencies for policy influence.

RAPID OUTCOME MAPPING APPROACH

a guide to policy engagement and influence

CONTENTS

ACRONYMS

CEL	Context, Evidence, Links framework
DFID	Department for International Development
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
M&L	Monitoring and learning
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
OM	Outcome Mapping
PEFA	Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability
RAPID	Research and Policy in Development programme
ROMA	RAPID Outcome Mapping Approach

Introduction

Many organisations working in international development want to contribute to policy change. These may be small non-government organisations working to improve health care for a marginalised group or large research institutions trying to improve urban planning: whatever their size or purpose, one of the ways to cement the changes they desire is by influencing policy. Policy change can take many forms: while changes to legislation are often seen as the most concrete ways of making change happen, in fact public policy comprises many non-legislative issues, such as regulations, resource allocation and decisions about whose voices to include in debates or what evidence to base decisions on.

For the past decade, the RAPID[1] team at ODI has been working with a wide range of organisations in a wide range of contexts to understand how to foster sustainable policy change. The result is ROMA – the RAPID Outcome Mapping Approach – which is the subject of this guide. ROMA is an approach to improving your policy engagement processes, to influence change. It comprises a suite of tools that any organisation can use at any stage in their policy engagement process to improve how they diagnose the problem, understand the types of impact their work could have on policy-making, set realistic objectives for policy influence, develop a plan to achieve those objectives, monitor and learn from the progress they are making and reflect this learning back into their work. This guide to ROMA summarises what the team has learned over the years.

It is worth noting that ROMA draws heavily on the concepts underpinning Outcome Mapping (OM). Developed in the early 2000s, OM is an approach to fostering change that centres on understanding how different actors behave and how changing the behaviour of one actor fosters change in another (see Box 1). The context within which policy change happens is a complex one, happening with a range of different actors at different levels, as Chapter 1 outlines. Over the years, the RAPID team has found that OM-based approaches help organisations navigate this complexity to understand how policy change really happens and what they can realistically hope to achieve. In the team's experience, OM-based approaches perform better in this regard than approaches based largely around delivering specific outputs to specific deadlines.

Box 1: Outcome Mapping

OM was developed by Sarah Earl, Fred Carden and Terry Smutylo from the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) as a way of planning international development work and measuring its results. OM is concerned with results – or 'outcomes' – that fall strictly within the programmes sphere of influence, and it works on the principle that development is essentially about people and how they relate to each other and their environment. The focus is on changes in behaviour, relationships, actions and activities in the people, groups and organisations it works with directly. At a practical level, OM is a set of tools or guidance that steers project or programme teams through an iterative process to identify their desired change and to work collaboratively to bring it about.

For more information, visit the OM Learning Community: www.outcomemapping.ca

Box 2: Definitions of 'policy', 'influence' and 'engagement'

Policy: we define this fairly broadly as a set of decisions that give rise to specific proposals for action. Many people equate policy with legislation, but it also includes non-legislative decisions such as setting standards, allocating resources between organisations, changing the levels of subsidies or taxes or consulting specific groups in the policy-making process.

Influence: in general, we define influence as the goal to be achieved – the evidence of your influence on a decision or set of decisions.

Engagement: in general, we define this as the means of achieving that goal.

We refer to both influence and engagement, depending on the context. It is difficult to completely separate influence and engagement: greater influence may lead to improved engagement, or better engagement may lead to greater influence. It will be up to individual readers to define how they see the relationship between influence and engagement in their particular context.

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1. The RAPID (Research and Policy in Development) team is one of many teams at the Overseas Development Institute (ODI). Its original mandate was to understand the links between research and policy; this has since been broadened to consider other types of knowledge, not just research.

1. THE APPROACH

ROMA consists of three main activities, each of which is broken down into a series of steps. These are set out in Figure 1, and described in detail throughout this guide.

Diagnose the problem
- Identify stakeholders
- Diagnose complexity and uncertainty
- Understand why it persists
- Pinpoint root causes

Develop a strategy
- Identify realistic outcomes
- Identify your influencing objectives
- Develop a theory of change
- Develop a communication strategy
- Assess your capacity and resources
- Choose communications activities
- Finalise your strategy

Develop a monitoring and learning plan
- Define information requirements
- Collect and manage data
- Make sense of data to improve decision-making

Figure 1: The ROMA cycle

Each step is associated with a set of tools, to be used with partners and stakeholders to develop a shared understanding of what the objectives are and what needs to be done. In some cases, these tools will be a series of questions to be answered with research and analysis; in others, they will be workshop or interview techniques. Policy processes can be highly political, sometimes involving dense networks of actors and coalitions with competing values and interests. Engaging with policy in these types of environment requires a collaborative approach, and ROMA has been designed specifically to facilitate collaborative engagement. Drawing on the principles of OM, each of the stages includes tools to help groups and networks of policy actors to coordinate their work and learn together.

Chapter 1 (Identify the problem) shows how important it is to diagnose your problem thoroughly, so you address the root cause of the problem rather than its symptoms. Carrying out a thorough diagnosis will help you understand better what issues you need to work on, with whom and what their motivations might be for working with you. ROMA offers different tools for this: you can do a first approximation with the 'five whys' technique and a more detailed diagnosis with the fishbone diagram. The case study from Nepal demonstrates that changing policy is by no means the only goal: there are many other issues that need to be addressed to improve the way, for example, migrant workers are treated.

The second part of Chapter 1 helps you further diagnose complex issues. ROMA offers you a clear analytical framework for building your problem diagnosis in some detail into your objective and approach. Larger programmes could carry this out as an in-depth analysis, but smaller projects and programmes may not have the resources to do this. However, discussions around the different headings (such as whether capacity to implement change is centralised or distributed) will help you focus on key challenges and raise issues that can be further addressed as you work through the rest of the ROMA process.

Chapter 2 (Develop a strategy) is the heart of ROMA: a set of workshop-based tools to engage your stakeholders around a clear objective and develop your plan. The tools can be used separately or together, and in any order: each builds on the other to add layers of analysis. The centre of ROMA is the idea, taken from OM, that sustainable change often results from incremental changes in people's behaviours, not just in the outputs they produce. Once you have described your initial objective, setting out the changes you would expect, like and love to see is a useful way to think about the outcomes and impacts your work can deliver. The process provides a useful first check on how realistic your initial objective is and explains the theory of how change is likely to come about.

Good communication is central to ROMA and throughout the life of any policy-influencing project. Communication serves different purposes: influence will not come about by simply disseminating the results of your work and hoping they will be picked up. The more complex the problem you are addressing, the more likely it is you will need to adopt a knowledge-brokering approach. This will involve strengthening communications within networks of people and organisations, facilitating a collaborative approach to problem-solving and being involved in debates about change and how it happens. ROMA helps you understand what sort of communication and knowledge-brokering roles you could choose and what sorts of effects they are likely to have.

Chapter 3 (Develop a monitoring and learning plan) helps you ensure you learn, efficiently and effectively, about the strategies you have put in place to achieve your objective and how to improve them. Traditional monitoring approaches, which rely on predefined indicators, do not work well in complex situations where the context changes (sometimes rapidly), new stakeholders come in and out of the picture or new evidence emerges. ROMA helps you develop a monitoring strategy that is appropriate to your purpose, the scale of your project and the context within which you are working.

This does not mean it is a light-touch approach: far from it. ROMA helps you prioritise your needs for monitoring; how you balance the need to be accountable to funders with the need to build trust among your stakeholders or how to balance the need to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of your operations with the need to deepen your understanding of the particular context you are working in. There are no fixed answers. Instead, ROMA helps you make a reasoned judgement, and decide on the different tools you could use to collect the information you need and make sense of it.

As suggested by Figure 1, ROMA is full of feedback loops. It is a process that encourages constant reflection on how you have characterised the policy problem, your plan for approaching it and how you manage the implementation of that plan. Within each chapter we provide internal links, encouraging you to move between the chapters.

2. A BRIEF HISTORY OF ROMA

ROMA did not spring from a grand theory of how uptake and impact could be achieved. It evolved over a long period and through the documentation of more than 100 case studies on how research has or has not contributed to changes in policy and practice. It is worth understanding how this evolution happened, as it continues to this day.

The programme of work that developed into ROMA began in 2004 with the idea of 'policy entrepreneurship' – the idea that researchers can move beyond simply producing and disseminating knowledge to directly engaging with policy-makers from the earliest stages of research in order to influence their decisions. This early work proposed that the uptake and use of research-based evidence in policy did not depend just on the quality of the evidence but also on three other factors. Together, these factors were called the RAPID Context, Evidence, Links (CEL) framework.

External influences – socio-economic and cultural influences, donor policies etc.

The **political context** – political and economic structures and processes, culture, institutional pressures, incremental vs radical change etc.

The **links** between policy and research communities – networks, relationships, power, competing discourses, trust, knowledge etc.

The **evidence** – credibility, the degree it challenges recieved wisdom, research approaches and methodology, simplicity of message, how it is packaged etc.
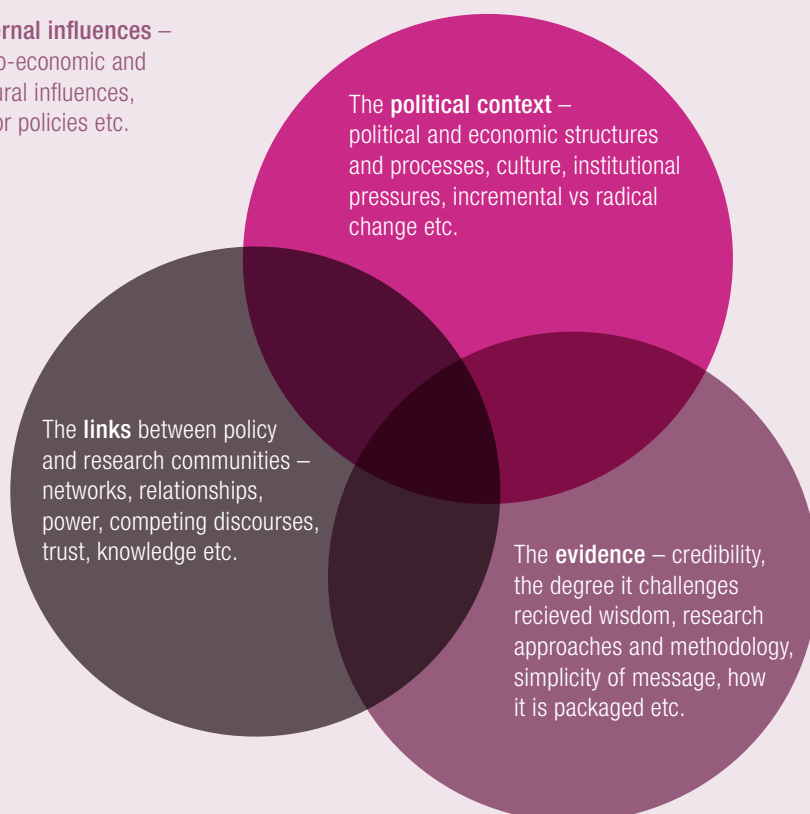
Figure 2: RAPID's CEL framework remains a useful way of conceiving of the major factors influencing the uptake and use of research evidence in policy

Formulating the CEL framework led to a series of policy entrepreneur workshops. The idea was that, once equipped with a set of simple steps to formulate and implement a plan, sufficient skills and appropriate tools, researchers or others seeking to effect change could navigate this complex environment and improve the likelihood of their evidence being listened to and incorporated into policy and practice.

In 2005, the RAPID team was introduced to the concept of OM. OM offered a complete narrative that helped bring together the somewhat fragmented set of policy entrepreneurship tools. By focusing on change, particularly behaviour change, it provided a new way of thinking about the objectives of policy work as changes in the behaviour of those who inform, make, implement and evaluate policy (as opposed to the previous idea that change was only really encapsulated in statements in policy documents). Importantly, OM introduced two crucial ideas to RAPID's emerging approach. First was the notion of 'boundary partners' — those people or organisations that become direct working partners. This helped narrow the universe of potential stakeholders to those who were appropriate to target. Second, the concept of 'progress markers' made it clear change generally happens in small steps.

Together, these ideas helped shift the emerging approach away from one of planning with final impact indicators in mind, towards one of focusing first on the more immediate ones with an emphasis on monitoring and feedback. The RAPID team began to consolidate ROMA into a series of steps, centred on the constant definition and redefinition of the long-term objectives of policy engagement. Tools for stakeholder identification, strategy development, monitoring and learning, communication and internal capacity supported these steps.

The team worked with a wide variety of organisations, ensuring ROMA carried on incorporating new tools and refining existing ones. As different people joined the team, ROMA expanded to include tools to help analyse the political context and improve research communications, theories of change and knowledge-brokering. A key thread throughout was the team's attempts to better understand complexity and the challenges of working in complex environments. This underpinned what had been an essentially evolutionary approach.

At its heart, ROMA remains an analysis- and workshop-based technique that encourages feedback from teams working on very different issues and in very different contexts, and inspires experimentation with new techniques. Indeed, the process of writing this guide has helped the authors think more critically about what ROMA is and how to incorporate new issues and insights into the approach.

3. WHAT ROMA IS – AND IS NOT

As noted, ROMA is an approach to improving how you engage with policy to influence change – it is not a blueprint for making policy change happen. As Chapter 1 shows, most development problems are complex and cannot be addressed by interventions based on an idea of linear change. Where the problem itself is complex, the environment within which policy is made will also be complex, and there are too many unknowns to just roll out a plan and measure predefined indicators. Learning as you go will need to be the hallmark of your strategy: using the phrase 'it's complex' should become a trigger for interesting exploration and reflection – not a means of ignoring difficult issues that do not fit your plan.

Second, ROMA is a whole system approach – not a step-by-step methodology. The steps and tools outlined in Chapter 2 fit together in different ways, and there is no single 'best' way to use them. It is important to understand all the ROMA steps and how they relate to each other before working out where to begin planning for policy influence. ROMA is also scalable: it can be applied to a small intervention, such as the promotion of research findings during an international event, or to a large multi-year programme or campaign to bring about changes in a particular sector.

Third, ROMA is a process of constant reflection and learning: it is not just a means of collecting better data or an evaluation methodology. Because it can be complex, policy engagement faces many different challenges: what the goals really are, who to engage with, how to do it and how to cope with evolving contexts. Overlaid on that are challenges any organisation faces, such as demonstrating financial accountability and good governance and achieving objectives efficiently and effectively. This means collecting information about a variety of issues over different timescales while ensuring data collection does not become an end in itself. Chapter 3 outlines the different reasons for monitoring that link learning to action.

No individual part of the ROMA toolkit will give you a single right answer to the question of how best to engage with policy. While they are probably best used in the sequence shown, at each step you will be encouraged to reflect on whether you need to revisit previous actions in the light of work completed. For example, developing your engagement strategy may reveal gaps in your change theory; revising this may lead you to add a bit of nuance to the outcomes you can expect and thus prompt you to broaden your policy objective.

4. HOW TO IMPLEMENT ROMA

ROMA is implemented with a mix of workshops, rapid reviews, detailed analysis and research and time spent on reflection and learning. The RAPID team has found that, while workshops can be expensive – especially in terms of people's time – they are a cost-effective way of building joint ownership of a project or programme when several partners are involved. They also provide dedicated time to focus on the influencing project, beyond the day-to-day work environment. Individual pieces of analysis – from rapid reviews to well-resourced studies – can be done in preparation. But we have not found a good substitute for getting together in a room and grappling with the issues.

Much analysis can be done during a workshop, but it may be necessary to commission specific studies to gather more data and insight. Depending on time and resources, you must decide whether a basic analysis is sufficient or whether a separate, more formal study should be commissioned. The same is true for options for monitoring and evaluation (M&E). The implementation team can collect and analyse a lot of data but this may not be enough. Time should be earmarked for more detailed enquiry or someone commissioned to conduct this.

5. HOW TO READ THIS GUIDE

Because ROMA is not a linear approach, this guide does not need to be read from start to finish. Each chapter refers to the others and each presents the tools for addressing a particular policy-influencing problem. Some readers may have spent a long time analysing the issue already and want to fine-tune how they engage with policy to influence change; others may only be starting out. The activities, steps and tools in ROMA were designed to be useful to a broad range of people, each with potentially different requirements.

The best way to read this guide therefore is to identify your most pressing problem at the moment and dive into the appropriate chapter.

Chapter 1

offers focused analysis for problem diagnosis. It presents tools for diagnosing the root cause of a problem, describes key ideas underpinning the notion of complexity and shows how these can be applied to policy-making processes. A case study from Nepal shows how the tools apply to a real-world situation.

Chapter 2

outlines the ROMA process for planning an engagement strategy: a series of workshops that bring teams together to develop a shared understanding of their influencing strategy and to plan the process of engagement, including the critical components of communications and knowledge-brokering. It is less analytical than the previous chapter and looks instead at the questions, tools and techniques to use in the workshops. The sequence suggested in the chapter can be followed if you are just beginning to describe your policy-influencing work, but it is not mandatory. Each workshop can be used separately to refine an ongoing engagement strategy. A case study describes how a World Vision team put ROMA into practice in Zambia.

Chapter 3

provides a framework and practical tools to help readers develop a clear plan for monitoring and learning. It answers the important questions of 'why monitor?' and 'what to monitor?' before presenting a list of different techniques for collecting the relevant information. It ends with a section on different ways to make sense of all this information so teams can incorporate it into their forward work plans without feeling overwhelmed.

Conclusion

briefly summarises the main lessons for the main audiences for this guide.

6. WHO IS THIS GUIDE FOR?

Team leaders in both research and implementing organisations (such as non-government organisations) need an overview of the whole process of policy-influencing. They need to be able to communicate this overview to the entire team, build on the team's knowledge to strengthen the strategy, spot weaknesses that could undermine that strategy and report on progress to partner organisations and funders. Where to begin reading will depend on where current weaknesses lie. Unless there is a specific area to focus on, we suggest team leaders begin by strengthening the diagnosis of the issue to address (Chapter 1) before looking to see whether M&E systems are providing information good enough to understand how progress is being made (Chapter 3). Only after that would we suggest changing the design of a team's engagement strategy (Chapter 2).

M&E staff will, we suggest, get more out of beginning with Chapter 3 in order to analyse current systems for M&E and work out what could be strengthened. During that process, it would be useful to reflect on the tools discussed in Chapter 2, to consider how to improve the way the engagement strategy is planned and what sort of information to feed into the monitoring system. Chapter 3 will help M&E staff understand the breadth of what could be monitored, and answer the question of how much effort should go into monitoring unintended consequences. It may also help foster a team-wide discussion about how to define the intended and unintended effects of the engagement strategy, which in turn will lead back to revising the M&E strategy.

Researchers and practitioners – those who are immersed in implementing development projects or programmes, or conducting the research – will probably gain the most out of understanding the interplay between Chapter 1 (problem diagnosis) and Chapter 2 (planning an engagement strategy). This will help refine influencing objectives and provide a series of concrete steps to take. Chapter 3 will then help researchers and practitioners to assess what is important to measure and to ensure the 'right' monitoring evidence is used to take the 'right' decisions about the direction of their project or programme.

Communication specialists will need to provide collaborative communications support to colleagues using the tools in ROMA, particularly when working with partner organisations. Chapter 2 would be a good place for communications specialists to begin. Communications specialists should also be involved in any work to improve how the particular policy problem is diagnosed – in particular, Chapter 1 helps with explaining the importance of policy research in the wider context. Chapter 3 helps you develop the M&E evidence needed to communicate to external stakeholders about progress and impact. It is also important for communication specialists to have a good overview of the whole guide to ensure the project's communications are as good internally as they are externally.
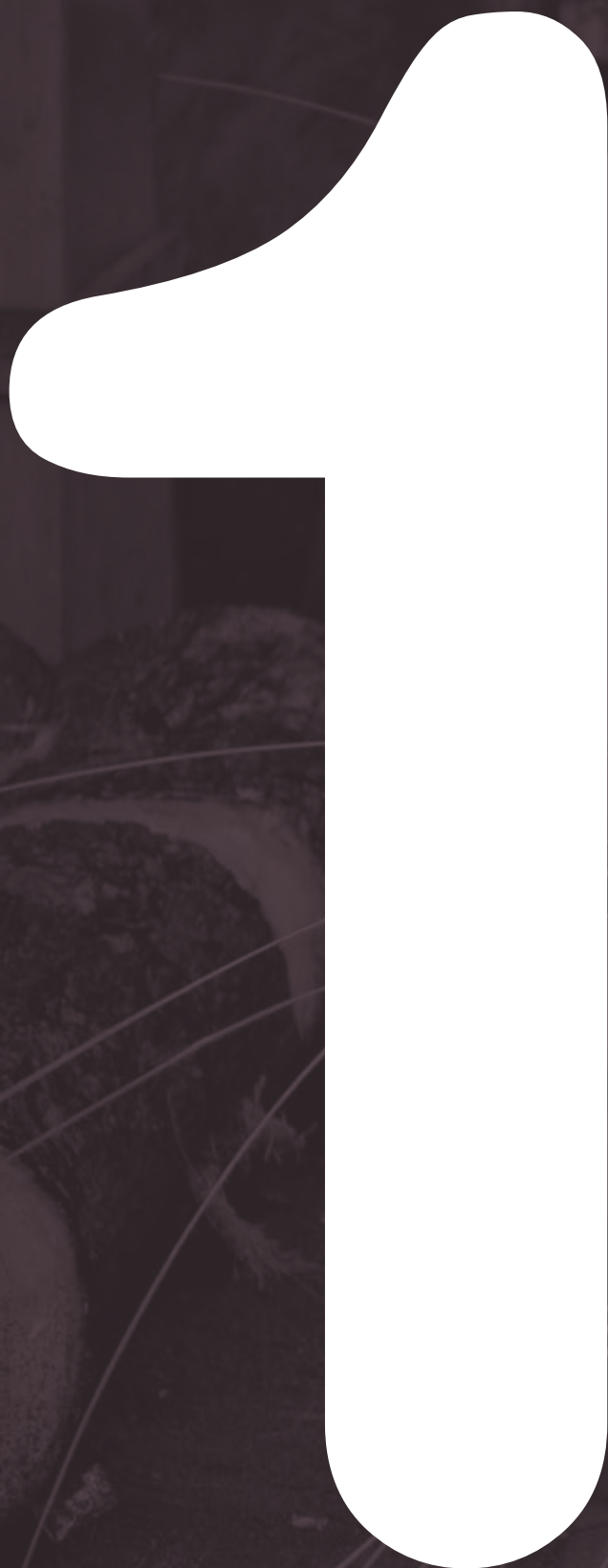
Policy-makers and **civil servants** will also find the ROMA way of engaging in policy useful. Mid-level civil servants are often tasked with engaging with colleagues, other departments or agencies to bring about certain policy outcomes (whether these be attitudes, changes in policy framework or changing practices). The RAPID team has worked with several groups of civil servants, helping them improve the influence they have within their own departments: Chapter 2 is useful in providing some practical steps on how this might be done.

Think-tank staff and **policy analysts** have a broad need to improve the ways they engage with policy-makers to bring about change. Think-tanks may be aware of the other guidance that has been written on policy-influencing,[2] but they will find ROMA's emphasis on diagnosing the problem (Chapter 1) and developing concrete and implementable monitoring and learning strategies (Chapter 3) particularly useful.

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2. See Young & Quinn (2012).

Finally, **donors** and **research commissioners** face a three-way problem as they search for the most effective ways to contribute to sustainable development. Both groups are increasingly keen to ensure the monies they disburse have an impact on policy and practice, but the pressure to demonstrate value for money runs up against the complex nature of development processes. We suggest reading Chapter 1 first to understand the three characteristics of complexity, before reading Chapter 3 to understand the types of information that contribute to ongoing learning. These may be very different from the types of information usually required for quarterly or annual reports: for resource- or capacity-constrained organisations involved in policy work, it will be important to ensure the learning purpose of monitoring is not completely subsumed by the need to demonstrate and report accountability. Even within their own organisations, teams sometimes struggle to assert their influence – research commissioners will therefore find the ROMA toolkit (Chapter 2) relevant for use among colleagues.

Finally, we have written this guide for a variety of different audiences. We have therefore attempted to keep the referencing to an absolute minimum within the text, except where we refer directly to specific publications. A full bibliography is available at the end of the book, for those readers who wish to take the analysis further.

Diagnosing the problem

Here we look at how to diagnose a problem: what its root causes are and why the problem persists.

1. DEFINING THE PROBLEM

The pressure to deliver results often limits the amount of time available to define the root cause of a problem. This is a false economy, as it can lead to projects and programmes that address symptoms rather than causes. ROMA helps you understand the root cause of the initial problem you have identified. Two different options are presented below. The 'five whys' technique is useful for a first approximation at finding the root cause. A fishbone diagram helps you delve into the issue in more detail.

A first approximation: the 'five whys' technique

The 'five whys' technique asks you to identify the initial problem and then answer why it is a problem five times. After the fifth 'why' you will have reached a real depth of understanding about the issue. This helps go beyond the initial issues or those that are immediately apparent, to work out what is causing the problem and where the most effective entry points are. Box 3 provides an example from a project on public expenditure and financial accountability (PEFA).

Delving into the detail: fishbone diagrams

The 'five whys' technique may give you sufficient information to begin to construct a robust objective for your policy-influencing work. However, if it is clear the problem contains several different components that need to be broken down, a fishbone diagram can help you get into the detail (see Box 4). Sticky notes are helpful to brainstorm and group the sub-issues that together contribute to the main issue you are trying to address.

Box 3: Five whys in practice

Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability (PEFA) indicators are widely used to assess whether a country has the tools to deliver good fiscal discipline, to allocate its resources strategically and to use its resources for service delivery efficiently. A suite of indicators is used to make these assessments (see www.pefa.org), one of which relates to public sector procurement, which we explore here.

The initial problem statement might be:

'the problem is that we get a D on the PEFA procurement indicator, because we do not have a law requiring competitive bidding across government'.

1. Why does this matter?

Without this law there is an incentive not to use competitive bidding in procurement deals.

2. Why does 1. matter?

Without this incentive, most procurement deals are currently done through sole source methods.

3. Why does 2. matter?

Sole source methods can increase corruption and lead to higher procurement costs and lower quality.

4. Why does 3. matter?

We have evidence that many procurement deals have been overly costly and goods are poorly provided.

5. Why does 4. matter?

High-cost, low-quality procurement is undermining the provision of key services across government.

This process of the initial specification of the problem – the need to introduce an externally defined 'best practice' to mandate competitive bidding – is in fact prompted by the need to improve the cost and quality of procurement. The latter problem is much more complex but is the root cause that needs solving. However, it is unlikely to be addressed by simply mandating the use of competitive bidding.

It is very unlikely that you will need to ask 'why?' more than five times. In some cases, you may find you have reached the root cause of the problem after only three or four rounds of questioning. You will know when to stop because the answers will begin to broaden out rather than narrow down.
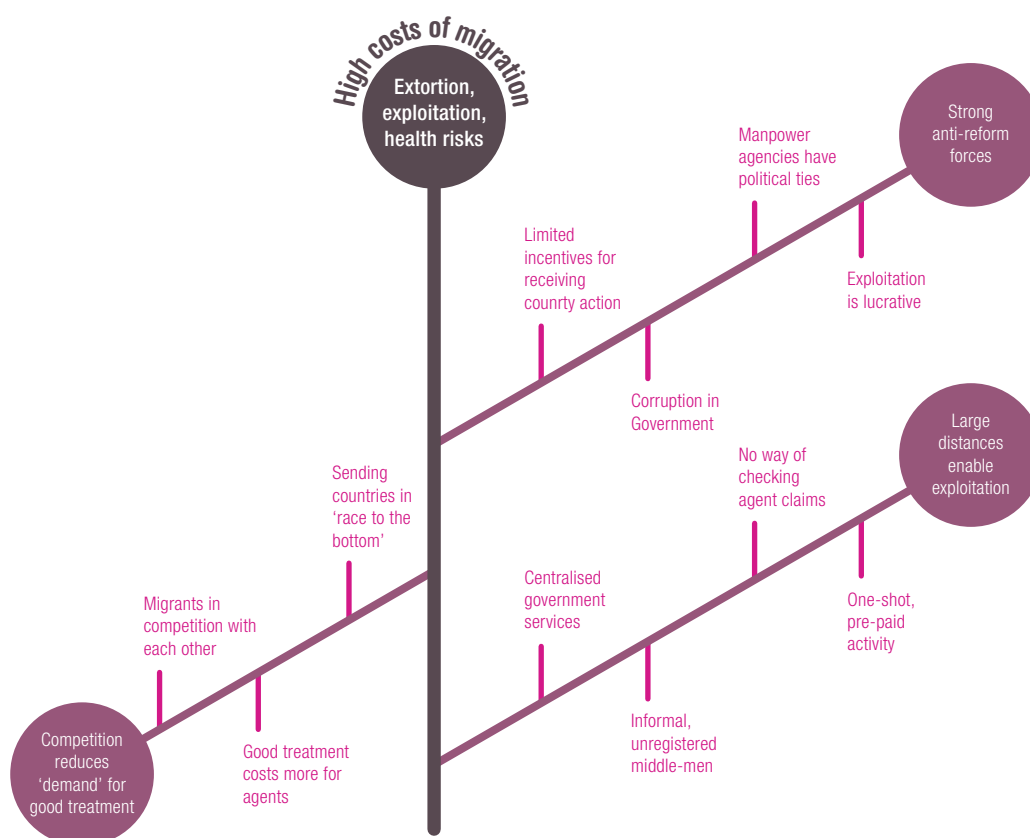
Figure 3: Fishbone diagram of the problems facing Nepali migrant workers

- Begin with the problem as it presents itself.

- Brainstorm all the individual causes you can think of for that problem: this is best done if it has been supported by detailed research and analysis.

- Group these causes and develop the diagram as above (you do not need to limit yourself to three sub-groups, but more than that may prove unworkable).

Figure 3 shows the issues Nepali migrants face as they look for overseas employment. It was developed to help design a programme to reduce the high costs of migration through packages of technical assistance and other types of support. The process began with detailed reviews of the literature on migration, interviews with policy-makers and representatives of migrant workers and wider consultations.

Box 4: Five whys

Every year, 2 million Nepalis travel abroad for permanent and semi-permanent work, leaving through a network of formal labour agencies and informal recruitment agents. A large number of them are extorted – more than 75% pay above the legal maximum fees to secure a job.[3] A large number are also exploited – forced to work inhuman hours in difficult conditions, paid wages considerably lower than promised, being sacked when they fall ill. This exploitation and extortion occurs along the chain of agents and agencies through which migrants travel in Nepal, among middlemen in India and receiving countries and among employers.

Figure 3 shows the component parts of this problem. Policy does play a role but it is not the most important one. Although laws are in place to penalise Nepali manpower agencies proven to be mistreating migrants, very few such agencies have actually been punished. Middlemen are unregistered, which makes it difficult to enforce laws, and the formal labour agencies that oppose reform have political ties. Competition for places reduces the demand from Nepali migrants for better treatment. Since the Gulf is a considerable distance from Nepal and Gulf governments are reluctant to lose a source of cheap labour, there is no real political appetite to reduce the exploitation.

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3. All information from this case study is taken from Jones & Basnett (2013).

Analysing the stakeholders of a problem

Whether you have used the 'five whys' technique or a fishbone diagram, an important step is to map which people/organisations/bodies have an interest in the problem – that is, the stakeholders. Both techniques will probably have shown you that a wider range of stakeholders is involved in the problem than was initially apparent. A stakeholder mapping exercise helps you understand what drives their interest, influence and actions or explains their positions in a programme. It can generate a large amount of useful information about the relationships between different groups of people and how those groups are likely to behave when confronted with the possibility of change.

ROMA uses a simple 2x2 matrix, the 'influence and interest matrix' (Figure 4), to map the stakeholders, in four steps:

1 Clarify the project's overall objective using the 'five whys' or fishbone diagram process.

2 List all the stakeholders you can think of: it is helpful to put each one on a sticky note.

3 Draw the axes of the map, as below, on a large sheet of paper, and place the sticky notes on the map. Begin by working out which stakeholder represents the extreme of each quadrant, and work from there. Your choice of where to place them on the map should be informed by some form of evidence. You could write the evidence on the back of the note. If you are working in distinct regions or countries, it will be helpful to construct different matrices for each one.

4 Go through the sticky notes and work out if you need to break any of them down to identify specific teams or individuals who have different degrees of interest or influence.
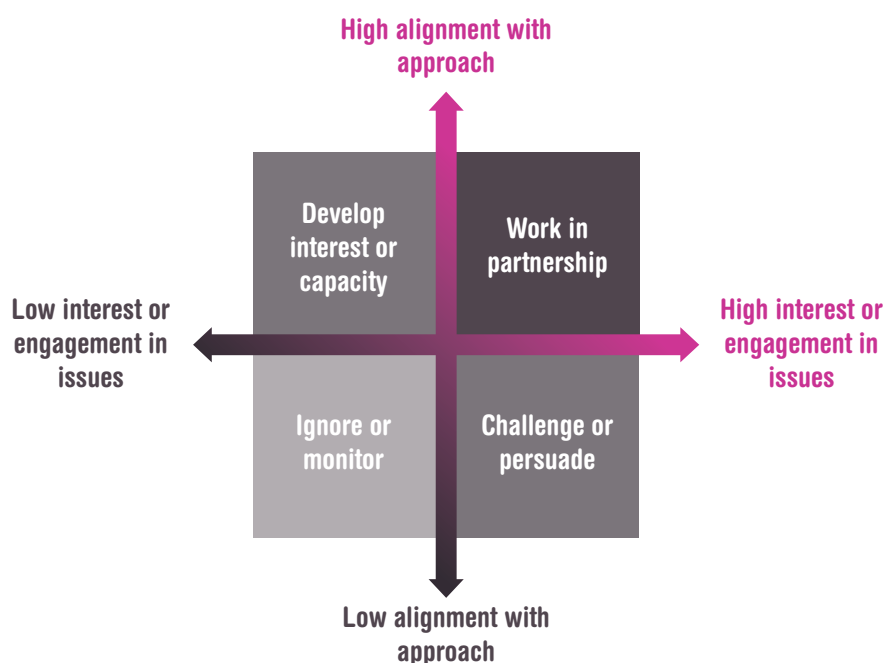

Figure 4: The influence and interest matrix

It is particularly helpful to do this as a group exercise, either with your immediate team or with your primary stakeholders – those you are working closely with to bring about change. Ensure a good variety of people in the group; include those working on communications and M&E, not simply the people implementing the project or programme. The greater the range of people the more detailed your analysis will be, though you need to balance this with considerations of how you will manage the process. If the group is large (say, more than eight people), it may be useful to allocate someone the role of facilitator, to keep the process active.

Discussions about who is influential, why and what forms of interest they show in an issue can uncover important relationships between the stakeholders that you can subsequently use to develop your influencing objective. It will also make it more likely that you will consider the full range of people and organisations that need to be included.

There are three things to remember when constructing an influence and interest matrix:

1 Not all people in an organisation will have the same degree of interest and influence. It may be worth separating them out so you can target the main opinion-formers or blockers of change.

2 It is important to consider all the stakeholders, not just those immediately involved. Separating out your primary and secondary stakeholders using different coloured sticky notes is a helpful way of ensuring you develop the matrix in sufficient detail: the more detail there is, the more likely you will be able to spot common characteristics between groups. This may help you develop your communication strategy (see Chapter 2).

> **Box 5: Using the influence and interest matrix for large or complex projects**
>
> For a large multi-country project based at ODI, this matrix was developed in two stages. One stage was done in London by the small project coordinating team, to map the international actors who would be interested in the results of the project, such as donors. The aim was to understand how best to communicate and discuss emerging findings. The other stage was done by the project teams in each country, working with their local collaborators to draw up a map that would help them understand how best to engage with different actors in the policy process in each country.

3 It can help to work out what incentives may drive each group to either support or oppose change. It is useful to consider the connections, networks, loyalties, patron–client relations, alliances and points of conflict among and between the different groups. Mapping connections between the stakeholders may also be useful.[4]

Jump to Chapter **2**

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4. See, for instance, www.odi.org.uk/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/6381.pdf

2. DIAGNOSING COMPLEXITY AND UNCERTAINTY

A final way of diagnosing why policy problems persist is to examine how simple or complex they are and what causes any complexity. It is helpful to do this as different types and degrees of complexity give rise to markedly different solutions and different approaches to achieving these solutions. Complex policy problems require a more iterative approach, to which ROMA is ideally suited.

In practice, there is no firm distinction between simple and complex policy problems – it is more of a spectrum – but it is helpful to clarify some of the distinguishing characteristics:

- **Capacities for change:** where policy issues are simple, decision-making structures are well defined and probably quite hierarchical. This means a decision taken higher up will filter through to the lower levels without much distortion, ensuring everyone is pulling in the same direction. In complex problems, decisions are not fully controlled by one actor but instead influenced by a number of different players with different opinions at different stages in the policy process. The responsibilities, skills and resources needed to make change happen are spread between different agencies or organisations.

- **Goals:** simple policy issues have goals that are widely agreed upon, so there is little conflict or controversy. Where policy issues are complex, different groups will want to pursue divergent goals and will pull in different directions, proposing or even pursuing vastly different courses of action.

- **Change pathways:** simple policy-making processes have regular rhythms, following set routines with foreseeable opportunities for engaging with them. Complex policy-making processes are much less predictable. It is difficult to understand what influences decisions until after the fact, and opportunities for making inputs into those decisions arise quite unexpectedly.

Gauging complexity will constitute one of the main challenges you will face when diagnosing your problem. Each potential aspect of complexity will prompt different approaches to influencing policy and managing your work. Table 1 summarises these approaches, which are described in more detail in the text that follows.

Table 1: diagnosing complexity

Principle for policy-influencing in simple situations	Dimension of complexity	Principle for policy-influencing in complex situations
Centralised capacity	Capacities for change	Distributed capacity
Hierarchical modes of decision-making can be influenced by interventions that are carefully targeted towards key decision spaces or specific organisations.		Influencing interventions should aim to capitalise on distributed capacities, finding ways to link up actors and action that foster more voluntary coordination and collaboration to bring about policy change.
Uncontested goals	Goals	Divergent goals
Influencing policy is a matter of showing new evidence helps achieve goals better than the evidence currently being used.		Influencing interventions must facilitate the joint interpretation of key problems by key actors, and must enable negotiation on and commitment to common goals.
Predictable change pathways	Pathways to change	Uncertain change pathways
Interventions can influence effectively by developing tailored analytical products that fit well into different stages of the policy-making cycle.		Influencing interventions must innovate, foster learning about how change happens and be flexible enough to adapt to emerging signals about what is and is not working.

Jones, 2011.

Distributed capacities

Where power and legitimacy to make and implement policies are distributed through networks of organisations, policy problems become more complex. Networks may be horizontal or vertical, involving both government and non-government organisations. How they interact may mean informal decision-making practices become more important. Failure to understand this may lead to missed opportunities to contribute to or influence change.

Policy is shaped in multiple interconnected spaces

Policies are often shaped by decisions taken at a variety of geographical scales, and within both formal and informal institutions. The 'spaces' where decisions are made will be interdependent, and may have been claimed or created by one or more groups of actors. Addressing complex problems will involve working with several centres of decision-making.

Implementation of policies leaves space for interpretation

No single organisation can deliver change on its own. The real nature of a policy is often strongly shaped during the implementation process, particularly in countries with strong systems of provincial government and within structures where there is strong competition for resources and responsibilities.

Confusion may arise when agencies face multiple directives that are not consistent. They may then choose to implement only a small part of what they are supposed to do. Although systems for monitoring and enforcement can play a key role in determining what outcomes are achieved (particularly around basic service delivery such as clean water provision), it can be difficult to implement these effectively where the issue of who has control and who should do the monitoring is contested.

Broad and diverse groups influence policy and reform processes

A variety of groups will often contest key policy issues, with no single one having sufficient power to impose its preference on others. This gives rise to a complex interaction of interests. Broad coalitions across various loosely connected groups may be needed to garner support for policy change. The importance of informal networks here should not be overlooked.

Knowledge on how to change policy is localised

Much knowledge on how to influence policy change comes from 'learning by doing', particularly when policy processes are characterised by informal institutions and relationships and unstructured decision-making. This means understanding key policy dynamics is likely to be incomplete, even for actors at the top of a hierarchy. The opportunities for change on a sub-issue may be understood only by those continually engaged in working on it.

Box 6: Distributed capacity in the problem of Nepali migrants

Policy on Nepali economic migrants is shaped in multiple interconnected spaces and by overlapping institutions, meaning its implementation leaves considerable space for interpretation:

- Employment agencies have strong political connections through which they can avoid punishment and stop reforms that might result in financial losses. This influence occurs in informal spaces.

- Government and business have strong links: many employment agencies are owned by prominent political figures and a large proportion of the rest have known allegiances to specific parties.

- Bureaucrats tasked with implementing foreign employment policy are effectively subjugated to these interests through patronage systems.

The actors who need to come together to press for harsher punishments are highly distributed and informally linked together:

- Migrants are a very broad group, and the migration process creates

further barriers, in part because of separation from social networks. Prospective migrants compete with each other for a limited number of jobs; absence from the country and inability to vote further limit their political power.

- A number of civil society actors work on migration, but there is currently no single strategic coalition pressing for change. There is a relatively strong academic presence on the issue; some established senior 'leaders' have the ear of high-level politicians and have carried out crucial research.

- The media and the general public have at times played a role in migration policy. Reporting on mistreatment and deaths abroad has occasionally led to a groundswell of public opinion against manpower agencies. However, this has not resulted in a broad coalition for change: the Nepali media itself often relies on foreign journalism for the reporting of incidents in migrant-receiving countries.

- The judiciary and the legal system have the power to help exploited migrants get compensation from manpower agencies, but there is insufficient legal aid in general, and for migrants specifically.

- Development agencies in Nepal do not have a strong focus on migration and are not well coordinated on the issue.

Actors outside the direct sphere of influence nonetheless play a major role in sustaining the problem, thus hampering reform efforts:

- Demand for cheap labour (such as for workers from agencies without paying commission) in receiving companies in the Gulf and elsewhere is high.

- Governments in receiving countries show little interest in protecting migrant workers' rights. Many are not signatories to international conventions on worker and migrant rights. International organisations working on migrant issues have little influence.

Divergent goals

Where different stakeholders have different goals, policy problems become more complex. For example, with collective action issues, it is highly unlikely success will be achieved by imposing the goals of one group on the others.

Narratives, values and knowledge compete

Underpinning divergent goals are typically quite different perspectives about exactly what the problem is, what the underlying factors are and how to solve it. The knowledge, beliefs and perspectives related to these are often major drivers behind the logic of people's decisions.

Policy change for complex issues requires reconciling divergent interests and goals

As different groups aim to advance their own interests, processes of policy change can function like a large-scale negotiation. This can result in allies of convenience: organisations work with other actors whose values may not necessarily be the same as theirs. In some cases, they may not share the same long-term goals but bond together to secure short-term change. In others, they have a common long-term interest but different short-term goals.

Implementation may involve conflicting (or unclear) mandates

Many policy issues are shared between several actors. This means that, for policy change to happen, stakeholders have to reconcile their different aims, mandates, approaches and resource needs. There may also be conflicts between medium- and long-term goals, particularly where top-line project goals are not realistically achievable within the prescribed timeframe and programmes needed to target intermediate changes.

Box 7: Divergent goals in the problem of Nepali migrants

Many stakeholders agree openly on the need to reduce the exploitation of migrants and punish those responsible. However, the underlying situation is more complex.

For some migrants, the goal of safety seems to come second to that of paid employment. Exploitation is to some extent naturalised: it is seen as an integral part of life for large sections of the male population.

Donors and international agencies that are explicitly or implicitly opposed to the mistreatment of migrants also face complications. Working to help labour migrants is a political risk as it promotes the exodus of Nepali workers: the International Labour Organization is officially opposed to labour migration.

Manpower agencies pursue exploitative practices to secure profits. In an industry where many players are cutting corners by paying less, taking a stand would make a single agency uncompetitive. Manpower agencies note that they are middlemen facing competition in destination countries and blame employers there for exploitation.

Political parties react to popular sentiment, and public outcry has resulted in high-profile policy announcements. However, the prevailing uncertainty and interim nature of politics in Nepal have encouraged parties to seek multiple sources of funding. Meanwhile, as manpower agencies provide one of the only booming and steady industries in Nepal, some see taking a stand on migrant protection as politically risky. Most political parties in Nepal place the blame for abuse on receiving countries.

Civil servants in Nepal acknowledge the problem, but their career progression is often driven by the need to maintain good political connections and to be loyal to patronage networks.

Uncertain change pathways

Where problems are complex, change is unpredictable. Making detailed, long-term and inflexible plans to influence policy will not work, as it is hard to understand in advance what the key drivers may be or how they will operate. Unforeseen windows for influence may be missed. As Chapter 2 shows, the emphasis needs to be on incremental change, monitoring and learning, with the flexibility to translate this into improved processes for influencing policy.

Box 8: Uncertain pathways of change in the problem of Nepali migrants

It is hard to predict when good opportunities will arise to increase the penalties for malpractice by manpower agencies. For example, how strong pressure for action is, and how long it lasts, depends on the severity of the incident reported, making it difficult to predict.

If governments resort to 'knee-jerk' models of policy-making, with quick-win actions, populist measures and/or soothing rhetoric, policy is often not well thought-through and may be self-defeating.

Occasionally, political parties have acted on migrant exploitation without waiting for another horrific incident, even when this has come at political cost with minimal gain. Such possibilities are hampered by the inherent instability of Nepali governments. Given the opaque nature of policy-making on labour migration, it is impossible to predict which of many possible entry points are the most promising.

Methods of influencing policy are therefore highly context-, issue- and timing-dependent.

Where knee-jerk policy is made, civil society figures with political connections may provide advice on likely policies, though often behind closed doors. Given the fragmented nature of Nepali politics, it is not easy to predict which connections (if any) will pay off.

Because of Nepal's political instability, consistent implementation of sanctions against labour agencies is unlikely. Instead, change will probably only come through a 'tipping point' of horror stories, a critical mass of support or another crisis narrative.

3. SYSTEMIC FACTORS: THE POLITICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT

A final step helps you consider the wider political and institutional environment, how it affects the persistence of a particular problem and where reform is most likely to come from. Understanding political context is a key part of understanding how knowledge, policy and power relations interact with each other and what this means for how research-based evidence is taken up and used. Asking five questions helps you develop this contextual analysis:

1 **Which branch of government holds the key to change?**
In most democracies, government is split into three parts: parliament, the civil service and the judiciary. This separation is intended to provide a series of checks and balances, as all three are involved in policy-making, albeit to different extents. Discussing the relationships between all three branches can help in uncovering whether these checks and balances work at all, and where the real blockages lie.

2 **Where and how does political debate occur?**
If political debate happens out in the open, there will be few blockages and it may be most helpful to actively engage in it. Where debate happens behind closed doors, or where there are strong vested interests involved, it will be difficult to engage, and you will need to consider other groups through which you could work to influence policy. Referring back to your influence and interest matrix will help you identify who those might be.

3 **What role do informal politics play?**
Informal politics, whether personality-, patronage- or group-based, can play an important role in policy-making. Where informal politics are strong, they can override formal policy-making procedures and block change from happening.

4 **Is there really capacity to make change happen?**
Many developing country governments have limited capacity to make change happen. Civil servants may be ineffective, political parties may have such a tenuous hold on power that they find it hard to implement substantive change or voting patterns may be so entrenched that change becomes unlikely – particularly if the change is designed to benefit marginalised groups who are less likely to vote.

5 **How do external forces influence change?**
Donor relationships, international dialogues and processes can have a strong influence on policy-making processes.

4. SUMMARY

In this chapter, we have discussed:

- how to define a problem, using diagnostic tools such as the 'five whys' for a first approximation of the problem and a fishbone diagram for more detailed diagnosis;

- how to analyse stakeholders of a problem, using an interest and influence matrix for mapping where different interests and influences lie;

- how to diagnose and respond to complexity, learning how to differentiate between centralised and distributed capacity, agreed and divergent goals and certain and uncertain change pathways; and,

- finally, how to assess wider systemic factors, through the use of five questions.

It will be important to document this analysis: keeping the maps and diagrams you have produced, the analysis you have done and the conclusions you have drawn from all of this. Some of the analysis may be in the form of a narrative document (such as in Boxes 6-8) to the level of detail you require. Others, such as key conclusions and actions from the workshops, may take the form of bullet pointed action lists that set out what you intend to do and by when. Not only will you need to refer to all your documents again, but also it can be helpful to share your analysis with others as you begin to engage with them.

2

Developing an engagement strategy to influence policy

This chapter sets out six steps to help you develop a strategy to engage with and influence policy effectively, depending on the nature of the policy problem, the context and the constellation of actors and networks.

At a minimum, you will know what the policy problem is you are working on: you may have done a good deal of work already to understand it, even if you did not use ROMA to diagnose the problem. Either way, as you work through this chapter, you may find you need to refer back to Chapter 1 to ensure you understand the root causes, stakeholder interests and influences, complexity and uncertainty and systemic factors.

The steps described in this chapter are as follows:

Step 1

Formulate a clear initial objective for your engagement strategy. This is likely to change as you monitor, evaluate and learn from the implementation process. But in order to assess how you allocate resources and begin to develop a strategy, you need an objective. The previous chapter demonstrated focusing techniques to ensure your influencing objective will get to the root of an issue within a nuanced understanding of what the problem is and why it persists.

Step 2

Develop a realistic **set of stakeholder-focused outcomes** to in turn help set the framing for the M&E strategy that is the focus of Chapter 3.

Step 3

Extrapolate from the analysis of the political context and the level of complexity in order to develop one or more hypotheses about how such outcomes are likely to come about, that is, **a change theory**. On the basis of this change theory, a framework is then used for Step 4.

Step 4

Select specific activities to be undertaken by you and your partners to ensure you are able to engage with your target stakeholders in the most appropriate way to help bring about your objective. This includes thinking about communication activities to reach your audience and writing a communications strategy.

Step 5

Highlight **capacity and resources** and how you might carry out the process of developing your engagement strategy.

Step 6

Develop the actual engagement strategy.

Before you begin, it is important to consider how much weight to give planning. The OM-based aspects of ROMA suggest it is less important to develop a detailed plan at the outset than it is to spend effort on monitoring and learning, based on an adequate plan. The lessons from diagnosing complexity indicate that, where change pathways are uncertain, planning should be light, flexible and responsive.

1. IDENTIFY YOUR POLICY INFLUENCE OBJECTIVE

A good policy-influencing objective should be clear about *why* the changes you are proposing are important, *who* they affect, *what* needs to be done about it and *where* you stand in relation to others who are also trying to bring about change.[5] In the spirit of doing no harm, it is useful to insert a final check to identify types of action that would be unhelpful in resolving the problem, and to consider possible incoherence and conflicting aims across the whole range of work you might be involved in.

If the policy problem you are working on has distributed capacities, then working in coalition will be crucial throughout the engagement process. Coalitions tend to be held together better by a commitment to common values than by tightly defined, specific objectives. In fact, coalitions can fall apart if they do not allow for sufficient ambiguity to cater for different interests. This will probably mean your initial specification of the objective for the coalition should be quite broad, leaving room for each of the different coalition partners to formulate sub-objectives that better reflect their particular goals. Understanding this coalition (which may be made up of a mix of stakeholders with short- and longer-term aims) will be a core part of your theory of change and communications strategy.

Checking the forces for and against change

Having defined the initial specification of your policy-influencing objective, identifying the potential barriers and enablers of change helps you target that objective in more detail. A force field diagram (as devised by the sociologist Kurt Lewin in 1951) is a simple diagram that can be drawn up on a large piece of paper in four steps:

1 Write the policy-influencing objective in the middle of the page.

2 Identify the forces for or against change. Refer to any previous analysis you have done, such as your 'five whys' or fishbone diagram. You do not have to go through each individual stakeholder on the map: it is better to identify the broad forces first and then work out whether they need to be broken down any further. All the forces in support of change are listed on the left (driving the change forward); all those against change are listed on the right. Sticky notes are helpful.

3 Organise the forces around common themes and work out the strength of each one, on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being weak and 5 being strong). The chart may look quite unbalanced at this stage, and some of the forces may be linked to each other (see Figure 5 overleaf).

4 To further refine the diagram, use a similar 1-to-5 scale to work out the strength of your influence on each of the forces. Adding the numbers together will give you an indication of how easy or difficult it will be to bring about change (see the case study at the end of this chapter for a fully worked example).

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5. The answer to the final question 'how the changes will be addressed' will be developed as you develop your strategy; Sections 2-6 in this chapter.

PLAN

Positive forces

Negative forces

Your influence on the force

4	4	Funds
5	1	Civil society organisations
2	2	Public demand
?	?	?

Minister of trade puts forward pro-poor trade and complementary policy programme to the cabinet by April 2008

Ministry of Finance	5	5
Time	3	1
Private companies	?	?
?	?	?

Your influence on the force

Figure 5: A force field analysis

Doing a force field analysis helps you reflect on whether your influencing objective is correctly specified and whether you should be focusing your efforts where you have a high degree of influence. Ensure you consider what others are doing, to avoid duplication of effort.

2. DEVELOP A SET OF REALISTIC, STAKEHOLDER-FOCUSED OUTCOMES

Understand which outcomes you are seeking

Having set out an initial objective for policy influence, it is important to push your thinking further ahead and consider the final outcomes you are seeking. In the context of an intervention seeking to influence policy, the outcome – in the simplest sense – is policy change. It is important to remember, however, that policy change is also a *means* to achieving an ultimate goal – such as better education, better public health, lower poverty or fewer deaths from curable diseases.

The ultimate goal will take a long time to achieve. So, in the process of working towards that goal, it is sensible also to focus on more immediate objectives and intermediate outcomes that are produced by the strategies and interventions chosen.

There are many different types of outcome we can look for that will tell us whether our interventions are having the desired effect. This may appear to complicate the task, but in fact it simplifies things by narrowing down where you need to look for outcomes.

We suggest nine possible outcomes to align with each stakeholder or group of stakeholders. For each stakeholder, consider which of the nine outcomes in Table 2 need to be addressed. Focus only on the top three priorities for each stakeholder; any more than that will become confusing.

Table 2: Measuring stakeholder-focused outcomes

	Outcome	Points to consider
1	Interest of key stakeholders; getting issues on to the policy agenda	How interested and open are policy actors to your issues? What kind of evidence will convince them?
2	Public opinion	How does the public engage in these issues?
3	Capacity and engagement of other actors	Who else is engaging in this policy area? How influential are they? What can be done to involve others?
4	Change in discourse among policy actors and commentators	What are the influential policy actors saying on this issue? What language are they using?
5	Improvements in policy-making procedure/process	Who is consulted during policy-making? How is evidence taken into account?
6	Change (or no change) in policy content	What new legislation, budgets, programmes or strategies are being developed?
7	Behaviour change for effective implementation	Who is involved in implementing targeted policies? Do they have the skills, relationships and incentives to deliver?
8	Networks and systems for supporting delivery	Are different actors working coherently together to implement policy? Are the necessary structures and incentives in place to facilitate this?
9	Relationships between actors	Do bonds of trust exist between different actors?

Adapted from Keck and Sikkink (1998) and Steven (2007)

The results around these outcomes will help you build a holistic picture of how an intervention is affecting the system with which you are engaging. It will help you focus on the smaller, incremental changes that are fundamental steps for longer-term, sustainable change.

It also helps you identify informal changes (e.g. outcomes 1 and 4) and formal changes (e.g. 5, 6 and 7); indirect (e.g. 2, 3 and 8) as well as direct influence (4, 5 and 6); and change at the level of systems (e.g. 3 and 8) as well as individuals (1, 4 and 7).

Not all of these will be relevant for every intervention. For instance, public opinion will be important only for interventions that rely on mobilising the public to exert pressure through the mass media. Likewise, capacity and engagement of other actors will be important to measure only if your strategy relies on indirect influence, for example through developing the enabling environment for civil society to work more equitably with parliamentarians.

Identify the incremental changes towards those outcomes

As noted in the Introduction, ROMA is an OM-based approach. This is centred on two key ideas: 1) that change occurs mainly through a series of small, incremental steps; and 2) that sustainable change comes about as a result of changes in people's behaviours, not just what they produce.[6]

The RAPID team has found that OM helps keep ideas about how change happens realistic, even where pressure from donors can encourage organisations to overstate their likely results.

OM defines three types of sustainable behaviour change. These are behaviours we would:

- **expect to see** – key actors demonstrate early positive responses and initial engagement with the idea of change or the issue;

- **like to see** – key actors are showing signs that the messages are being taken on board and are proactively changing the way things are done;

- **love to see** – key actors display deep transformations in behaviour that demonstrate that the idea of change has been deeply internalised and will be sustainable in the long term.

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6. Detailed information on OM can be found on the OM Learning Community. See www.outcomemapping.ca

Having decided which outcomes you are seeking for each stakeholder or group of stakeholders, it may be helpful to record these sets of behaviours in a table form, setting out who the stakeholder groups are, what their priority outcomes are and – for each priority outcome – what specific behaviours you might expect, like and love to see. Table 5 in chapter 2, a case study from a project with a large non-government organisation, shows what such a table might look like.

There are two points to note. First, while this table encourages you to look for incremental changes, radical change is possible. It is important to be constantly on the look-out for opportunities to push for significant change or to take advantage of opportunities when policy processes may suddenly become receptive to new evidence or ideas. These are more likely to happen after a shock or crisis, when a new party/regime/leader takes office and where levels of complexity and uncertainty are subsequently relatively high. However, the same circumstances can mean any change achieved may be short-lived and reversed.

Second, a backlash can be a positive sign that people or organisations are engaging with your message about the need for change, particularly where there are vested interests in keeping things as they are.

3. DEVELOP A THEORY OF HOW TO FACILITATE CHANGE

Once you have defined the outcomes you are looking for, the next step is to think about how these are likely to come about. Having an idea of how change is likely to happen will help you identify entry points and opportunities for the kind of actions you ought to take to set change processes in motion.

There will be no general applicable models of how change happens – largely because there are many different viewpoints and ideas about it. Every context has its own history and its own particularities. While there are some broad patterns, these are far from being fixed laws. Even an analysis of the past will be unlikely to be a definitive guide to how change might occur in future.

Some of the broad patterns derive from approaches to change in different academic disciplines like history, politics and sociology. So, for instance, historical analysis emphasises change through actors and structures; class and other social groups; cycles and crises; and reforms and revolutions. Politics emphasises institutions and ideology; sociology focuses on social movements, worldviews, power and culture.

Other viewpoints argue that change arises because of seismic evolutionary shifts or coordinated action among individuals with the same core beliefs. Change may come about where advocates successfully connect the way a problem is defined and the policy solution to the problem or political climate surrounding their issue, or to the way policy options are framed or presented. Change may also occur when individuals or groups work with those in power to make decisions or influence decision-making; or when there is collective action by members of a particular community who work to change the problems affecting their lives.

A theory of 'no-change'

There is currently a great deal of emphasis on theories of change and a proliferation of ways in which they are presented. In our experience, few of them give sufficient consideration to understanding the *status quo* and what a 'theory of no change' would look like. But, given the difficulty of change in many contexts, especially institutional change, it is worth asking why change is unlikely to come about. Mapping out where actor incentives, interests and embedded power structures prevent change from taking place will provide a useful baseline against which you can assess what changes have happened, to support your monitoring and learning processes.

A force field analysis complemented by a fishbone diagram (see Chapter 1) can be used to present an initial theory of no change. A more detailed analysis would build on this by analysing the complexity of the issue and the systemic political and institutional factors (Chapter 1, Section 2). The most detailed theory of no change would be done using a political economy analysis.[7]

An initial theory of change

Having set out the expect to see, like to see and love to see outcomes in the previous exercise, you will be part way to developing a theory of how change happens. To help you approach an assessment of how specific changes may occur, we suggest you refer back to Chapter 1, to the analysis of why the problem persists and in particular the analysis of systemic factors. For each stakeholder group it may be useful to consider how they would respond to socio-economic trends and unforeseen events.

All of this analysis can be drawn together into an initial theory of change. At this stage, the 'theory' you shape will be a hypothesis or set of hypotheses that needs to be revised and refined while you learn, interpret and adapt as your project or programme progresses. Eventually, this will enable you to build a more credible and robust 'theory of change'.

Identify realistic outcomes

Identify your influencing objectives

Develop a strategy

Develop a theory of change

Develop a communication strategy

Assess your capacity and resources

Choose communications activities

Finalise your strategy

Having looked at your outcomes and potential theories of change, you should now be able to specify your final policy-influencing objective.
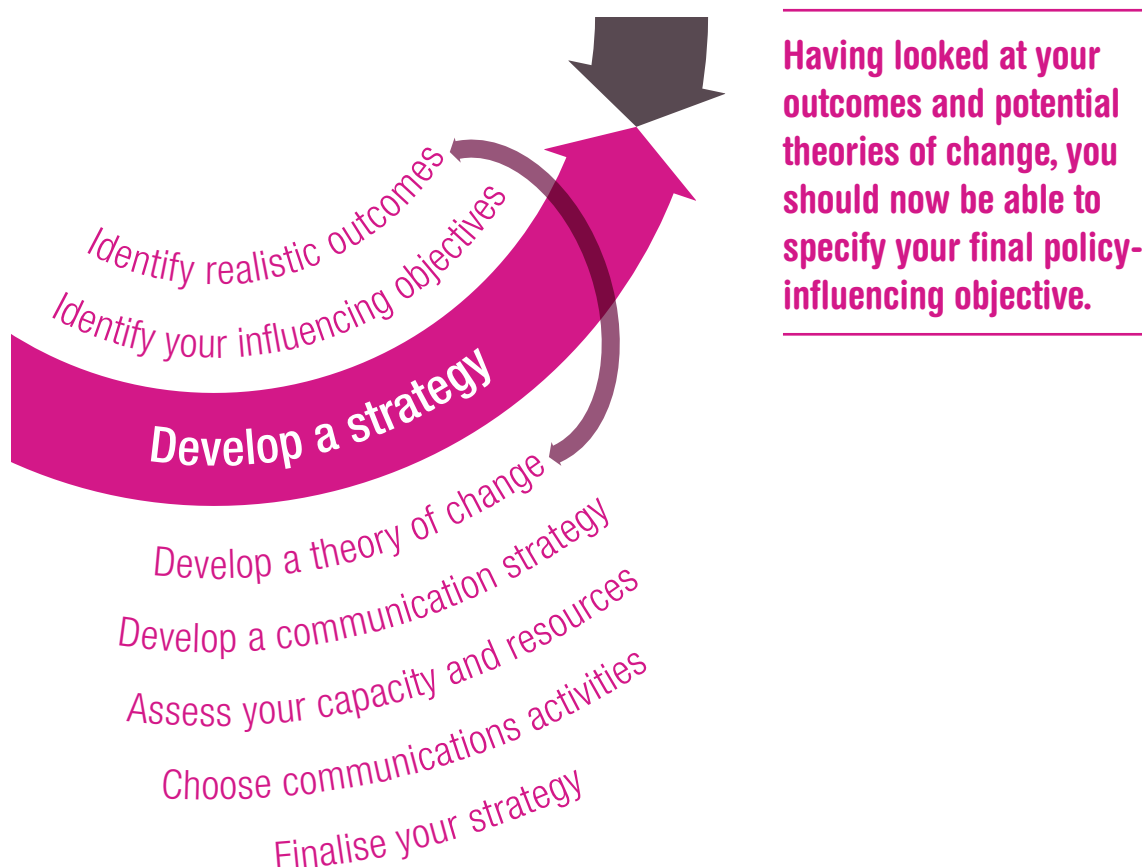
Figure 6: Feedback loops in the ROMA cycle

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7. There is a good deal of online guidance about how to do political economy analyses: see, for example, http://www.gsdrc.org/docs/open/PEA.pdf

4. DEVELOP YOUR COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

With your final objective clear, now is the point at which you can identify specific actions to facilitate change. We believe communications-based activities are some of the most important types of actions you can take. In fact, your communications strategy will be integral to your overall policy engagement strategy. For this reason, this section focuses on different aspects of communications and on writing your communications strategy.

Communication is fundamental to almost all approaches you will take to engaging with your stakeholders: it is an ongoing process that forms the backbone of your day-to-day work throughout the life of your project or programme. Relationships with stakeholders take time to develop, and the sooner they can be involved in some action the better.

When we talk about 'communication' we use the word in its broadest sense. Communication can take many forms, including online engagement and social media, field visits, public events or private meetings.

In this part, we discuss two broad communication approaches to achieve your objectives: first, how to encourage specific stakeholders (e.g. government decision-makers) to adopt a certain policy position; second, a set of functions/actions for problems with a higher degree of complexity. There is a degree of overlap between these two approaches, and your policy-influencing objective will help you decide your primary focus.

Communications approach 1: encouraging a particular policy position

You may want to encourage policy-makers to adopt a specific position. An essential first step is to assess the extent to which different stakeholders are predisposed to move towards that position. Some may already have commissioned research or begun activities relevant to it. But not all the stakeholders involved will agree with proposals or activities already under way.

There are several ways to engage with stakeholders in order for them to adopt a particular position. We distinguish these as:

Inside-track

These methods are generally collaborative. They may feature direct interactions with decision-makers, allies and other key actors. They include participation in negotiations, meetings, direct communications with government ministers or informal, face-to-face discussions with close collaborators and other contacts.

Outside-track

These methods are sometimes more confrontational. They may target large numbers of individuals, or the political debate on an issue, through public messaging and campaigning. They aim to build public support for a new policy, use public meetings and speeches to communicate the rationale for a proposed reform and/or use television and radio to raise public awareness of an issue.

There is also a distinction between approaches that work through formal and informal channels. Working on the formal side might involve inputting to structured consultation processes, giving formal submissions to a committee or providing advisory services to feed into specific decisions. Working through informal channels might involve trying to persuade key individuals through face-to-face discussions that occur outside work events, or claiming new spaces for expressing opinions through protest or activism. In total, this creates four possible communications methods to influence policy (see Figure 7).
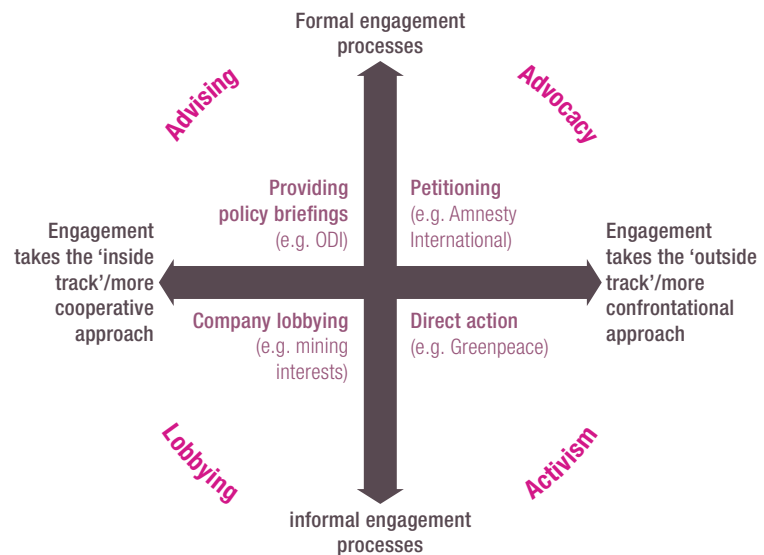

Figure 7: Four communications methods for influencing policy

Communications approach 2: knowledge-brokering

Getting others to adopt a specific position may not always be appropriate. There may also be several other voices and stakeholder groups asking the government to take different policy positions. Who prevails will depend on many factors.

Instead of achieving measurable impacts on policy, in these situations your intervention or action may be more about developing capacities, improving and broadening the quality of debate through furthering dialogue and sharing ideas. This is often referred to as a 'brokering' approach.

Brokering knowledge and relationships among and between specific stakeholder groups offers an approach to achieving this. At different stages, projects or programmes may need to undertake activities that are more interactive and multi-directional. Here is a set of knowledge-brokering activities, functions or strategies you may want to pursue.

- Informing and translating: this means disseminating or sharing content in a form that is appropriate to a specific audience. Key requirements in this are: understanding the targeted stakeholder and their needs; translating where necessary, particularly for non-specialist audiences; and packaging and communicating what has been produced in appropriate ways without compromising its objectivity. Rather than expecting key audiences to come to you, you push information to them, through the existing channels that they already use. Shaping your proposals to fit how the issue is framed may help make your ideas, or at least the way they are perceived by policy-makers, more relevant. 'Informing' and 'translating' might be appropriate when there is an existing demand for the information, where information can easily be understood and acted on and/or when it is important to reach as many people as possible.

Box 10: complexity and knowledge brokering

The more complex the context in which you are working, the more likely you are to need to pursue a brokering rather than an influencing approach.

- With **distributed capacities**, it may be more effective to strengthen communication within networks rather than aiming for a particular policy position.

- With **divergent goals**, a collaborative problem-solving approach may work better than attempting to drive change towards a single, pre-specified goal.

- With **uncertain change pathways**, use single rather than multiple entry points for communication.

- **Linking**: this means seeking out known experts to advise on a particular problem, which the policy-maker has outlined through briefings and roundtables, for instance. The person or organisation gives tailored advice in response to a clear remit, rather than simply providing information. Linking is appropriate when there is a clear policy question (and a formal written consultation is under way); where technical advice is required in response to specific questions; or where it is important to consult with specific groups of people local to a problem or issue. It can be informal, through interaction and discussions created through social networking and online forums.

- **Matchmaking**: this means introducing people to others they usually would not meet. This enriches the perspectives a policy-maker can draw on, possibly changing the framing of the policy question. This may be appropriate when there is a need to broaden policy-makers' horizons or to spot potential synergies with other issues to create a more strategic overview. Where issues are complex, involving multiple perspectives, it will be important to help decision-makers recognise that credible voices are not limited to technocrats or elites. Matchmaking is particularly appropriate in the case of strategic or complex policy issues that cannot be dealt with by a single organisation or where it is important to learn from experiences in other systems or countries.

Examples of these actions are summarised in Table 3.

Table 3: Measuring stakeholder-focused outcomes

Key functions	Activities this might entail	Typical communications role	What others can do
Informing and translating	Examples include factsheets, research synopses, web portals, databases, end-of-project seminars.	Preparing project reports, articles, briefing papers, web pages, presentations, animations.	Preparing project reports, articles, briefing papers, web pages, presentations, animations.
		Preparing briefs for policy-makers, web pages for the general public, guides for technical staff, reports or videos to local stakeholders (e.g. village committees) and project participants.	Preparing briefs for policy-makers, web pages for the general public, guides for technical staff, reports or videos to local stakeholders (e.g. village committees) and project participants.
Linking	Examples include project or programme advisory committees, focus groups, social networking communities such as LinkedIn.	Convening meetings and seminars with like-minded people.	Seeking out appropriate people to attend for particular issues.
Matchmaking	Boost credibility of other voices, such as supporting grassroots networks, by strengthening their arguments through more robust research and linking different levels of governance.	Seeking out a range of audiences, and following up with those who are interested to broaden the range of voices operating effectively in the space.	Seeking out appropriate people, focusing on those who are outside the immediate sphere within which the project or programme operates.
	Examples include departmental expert advisory committees, general conferences, university internships in government, mapping the evidence base for an issue.	Offering communications support to weaker voices, to help boost the collective message.	

Source: Jones et al. (2012).

Develop and refine your communications strategy

A communications strategy will underpin your overall policy engagement strategy. It does not have to be complicated, but should be something that has support from the team, programme or organisation, and ideally should be as practical as possible. It should not be too rigid and will need regular review to ensure it aligns with overall policy engagement activities. Most of all, it needs to be relevant to your context.

As you consider each stage, you can document key issues/notes in the template in Table 4.[8]

Table 4: Communications strategy template

Stage	Action
Policy objective and intended outcomes	Set out your policy-influencing objective, as in the main strategy, and the outcomes you are seeking.
Stakeholders	Identify and prioritise key audiences. Having already completed stakeholder mapping, this can be straightforward. If you have too many stakeholders this may need further prioritising. Produce a stakeholder map specifically for the communications strategy.
Key actions	Undertake linear research communications (e.g. packaging materials and presenting to media houses). Facilitate debate through events and roundtables. Develop capacity among audiences to use knowledge more effectively.
Messaging (not always clear in complex settings)	Develop your overall messages and sub-messages for each audience group. It may be difficult to do this initially; it can be refined over time.
Channels, tools and activities	If the first four sections are clearly identified then the rest of the strategy will fall easily into place. Decide on main channels for each audience group and, subsequently, relevant tools and activities. Be general initially if necessary, but more specific and realistic over time.
Resources	Good communications does not necessarily need a large budget, but it is essential not to underestimate the time and effort required. You may need to think about this sooner in the strategy. Use free online tools to share your communications rather than developing a website from scratch. But a dedicated person will still need to work on this.
Timescales	Always deliver what you promise and never over-promise. Create a calendar to share with your team. Assign a team member to ensure activities are delivered on time.
Evaluation and amendment	Setting aside time to assess the impact of your strategy is critical, though not necessarily complicated. Use online tools such as Google Analytics, coordinate short review meetings or create an impact log. This should align with what you decide more widely for your policy engagement strategy. Discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

8. Hovland (2005) and Economic and Social Research Council Impact Toolkit 2012: http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding-and-guidance/impact-toolkit/index.aspx

5. IDENTIFY RESOURCES AND CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT YOUR ACTIVITIES

Particularly for complex problems, policy engagement must be a collaborative approach. You may need to draw on people with a long list of different competencies throughout the engagement process, such as good political enablers (understanding the politics and identifying key players); good storytellers (able to synthesise simple compelling stories from the results of the research); good networkers (working effectively with all the other stakeholders); and good engineers (building a programme that pulls all of this together). Language skills, local knowledge, the ability to cultivate relationships and technical expertise are all key, as is skilful, structured, sensitive and independent facilitation of engagement processes.

The stronger the standing, presence and legitimacy of your organisation or coalition in the eyes of your target stakeholder group(s), the more likely you are to be taken seriously. An established track record, visibility and a solid reputation will help you be taken more seriously and open doors to policy processes and spaces.

There are three different things to consider as you identify the resources and capacity you will need for policy engagement: the management structures you put in place, how you collaborate and how you go about building capacity.

Management structures

Management does not simply happen: it is worth spending time considering which management structures within your project or organisation are likely to be most appropriate for the problem you face (for more on this see 'A Guide to Management in the Face of Complexity', Hummelbrunner and Jones, 2013).

Where there are distributed capacities, loosely structured governance arrangements tend to be more effective, though they rely on emergent and voluntary coordination, collaboration and partnerships. Decision-making should be decentralised where possible. Planning tasks and key management responsibilities should be decentralised, particularly where knowledge is localised. In these situations, it is difficult to ensure full compliance of actors through formal means such as contracting, or performance management systems. Instead, your influencing intervention should try to work with existing networks or institutions, seeing them as resources for change for helping understand and solve problems. It will be important to ensure power relationships are not overly skewed between partners, and management systems allow sufficient space for different members of the network to exercise any necessary discretion in how they work.

Where there are uncertain change pathways, management arrangements should prioritise flexibility. Any policy-influencing interventions must adapt to the findings from M&E – whether that means altering your influencing goals, scaling up or down or changing the way you allocate budgets. Building in flexibility helps avoid a culture of risk aversion and promotes an authorising environment that encourages learning and builds trust between your partners.

Collaboration

Following on from teamwork, collaboration between stakeholders is also worth exploring. This may be around a specific predetermined issue. In these situations, the decision-maker tends to frame the process, giving collaboration a contractual nature. Relationships are time-limited and will end when the project or pilot ends. This may be appropriate when there is a need to build a variety of relationships around a predetermined and longer-term issue such as a large-scale project or a policy pilot.

Alternatively, you may want to collaborate through a longer process of interaction between actors to respond more effectively to emergent issues. This allows all sides to frame the questions jointly, and more formalised relationships help ensure continuity. Collaboration is the key to amplifying different voices around an issue and to building and maintaining a broader base from which to discuss and define lessons that could inform a particular decision.

Where interests among key actors are entrenched, building coalitions may be particularly useful. Determining how to do this means developing a clear understanding of how the values held by decision-makers affect their calculations of political costs, and of how to construct broad, durable coalitions (as indicated in Chapter 1, diagnosing complexity). Engaging with informal networks of leaders and researchers in policy networks will also be key.

Understanding the credibility of different actors can create space for other less dominant actors to join policy deliberations. How are different actors perceived by those in positions of influence? Who should they ally themselves with to boost credibility? How might this be achieved?

Finally, it is important not to neglect internal teamwork. Policy engagement has to be a team effort, given all the different competencies that are needed.

Box 11 offers advice on conducting collaborative processes with multiple stakeholders.

Box 11: Facilitating collaborative processes

Intentions of collaborative work: normative motivations suggest collaboration is 'the right thing to do'; instrumental motivations imply it is a better way to achieve particular ends; and substantive motivations argue it leads to better ends. These are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

Approach used to collaborate with stakeholders: this varies according to the intention, the issue, the context and the stage of the policy process. It can shape what is considered evidence and whose voice is heard. Those being engaged with must feel comfortable with the methods employed. Imported strategies developed elsewhere can have different and unintended outcomes. A mixed methodological approach can help capture a range of perspectives from different stakeholders.

Representation and consultation: some argue that stakeholder engagement needs to go beyond convening small groups of people and engage with thousands. However, smaller, more interactive processes give a depth of discussion often lost in large-scale engagement. Processes to promote broad-based ownership need to reach stakeholder groups that face a number of barriers to participating.

Supporting stakeholder collaboration: stakeholders often need support to improve the effectiveness of their engagement. This might include giving participants more control over the process, providing information and training, logistical support, financial incentives and effective communication.

Working with public institutions: developing links with more formal arenas, such as bureaucratic processes of policy-making, is crucial if engagement is to be effective. This raises the question of how you engage with public institutions as well as how public institutions engage with the wider environment.

Promoting wider engagement: more emphasis on distributing the learning from often small-scale deliberative processes would contribute to wider dialogue among a wider range of stakeholders. This could be done through the direct involvement of more people in stakeholder engagement activities and/or communicating the outcomes and findings of such processes to more people.

Building capacity

Building capacity can take place at the level of the individual, the organisation or the systems or enabling environment.

- For the individual, capacity-building activities can focus on enhancing people's skills and competencies through activities such as the provision of formal training initiatives or 'learn-by-doing' approaches, through grant support from donors, non-government organisations or think-tanks. Examples include training in recognised disciplines; in the business of government; in information and communication technology (ICT), information storage and management; or in communicating and relationship-building.

- At the institutional level, enhancing capacities could focus on particular strategic planning functions, such as the ability to create a communications or influencing programme.

- At the systems or enabling environment level, building capacity for knowledge translation, supply and demand means focusing on the core processes of policy-making. This is to ensure goal-setting, programming, budgeting, business planning, forecasting, consultation and other 'boundary processes' are structured and used in ways that create and maintain effective demand for all types of knowledge.

6. WRITE YOUR ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

You should now be able to begin to write your full engagement strategy.[9] This will set out:

- Your policy-influencing objective(s) (Step 1);

- The forces for and against change (Step 1) and your theory of how change will happen (Step 3);

- The outcomes you would expect, like and love to see (Step 2);

- The communications activities you will undertake to achieve them (Step 4);

- Your communications strategy (Step 4);

- The resources available to you to implement your engagement strategy.

Wider issues to consider when formulating a strategy

ROMA helps develop the broad outlines of your engagement strategy. But there are a few wider issues to consider.

Be careful with political players. Those pursuing change are often urged to identify champions, brokers or policy entrepreneurs. These types of people are said to be influential within policy circles, highly supportive of a particular proposal, willing to take ideas forward to decision-makers and able to translate and spread them through networking. These people may well exist, but we offer a few words of warning. In some very fluid political contexts, it may be difficult for political actors to remain wedded to specific policy issues: what they say formally may well differ from what they think informally. Individual actors may have very little real power when leadership is distributed widely among a large group of people.

There are many other players. Given the politicisation of the civil service in many contexts, commentators and practitioners advise that, in order to work with public agencies in the long term, it is better to target and build relationships with second- or third-tier officials. These will be the ones to survive any cuts and are also the ones who possess the institutional memory that always strongly influences decisions and implementation. However, this is highly context-specific: in some countries, these officials simply do not have the political power to make decisions so your efforts can often yield few results.

9. Note that the balance of emphasis between the final objective and the rest of the engagement strategy is up to you: as mentioned earlier, your objective may well change as your engagement improves.

Identify how to influence actors indirectly. In situations where you cannot directly influence an actor, you need to determine who you can influence who will in turn influence that actor. Identifying existing coalitions or networks, building them and finding common areas of interests with such actors will be crucial. Being a member of certain existing networks may boost practitioners' credibility.

Interactions between different actors affect behaviour. As OM shows, one person's behaviour (or an organisation's behaviour) may be influenced by the calculation about the likely strategy of others. Personal and professional decisions are generally related to decisions taken by those around them and interactions between actors play an important role in the determination of policy outcomes. Those pursuing change need to recognise they may be influenced by others, even those who are not directly part of the change process.

Organisation type will shape your approach. Factors that will shape the approach taken will include the type of organisation you work for. For instance, a research centre is unlikely to want to organise a public demonstration (but this does not mean it cannot go into coalition with an activist organisation willing to do so). The approach taken will likely evolve depending on the target stakeholders' response to successive efforts. For instance, at first you may engage in closed-door meetings where research findings are shared (an inside-track approach). If you feel there is little response, you may decide that going through the media may pressure policy-makers into considering your proposal more seriously. This will differ from context to context. In some contexts, you may be censured for appearing confrontational; in others, your issue will not be taken seriously unless it is the focus of media attention.

7. SUMMARY

In this chapter, we have provided a set of tools and activities to help you define your policy-influencing objective and write your engagement strategy to achieve this objective. Here summarised are the various tools and activities, along with their relevant step number:

Step 1

Objectives. How to use a force field diagram and analysis to show what are the forces for and against change.

Step 2

Outcomes. Table listing nine stakeholder-focused outcomes and what to consider in each case. OM tool to select and categorise these as 'expect to see, like to see, love to see' outcomes.

Step 3

Theory of change. How to tackle drafting a theory of change in various contexts.

Step 4

Communications activities. Two approaches to communications activities: 1) specific policy position, diagram showing four communications methods including inside-track and outside-track; 2) knowledge-brokering for complex problems including informing, linking and matchmaking; how to write a communications strategy.

Step 5

Resources. Tips on identifying resources, especially teamwork and management capacity; table of activities for collaborating and building capacity at individual, organisation and systems level.

Step 6

Strategy. Bullet-list of headings to help you write your engagement strategy; wider factors beyond ROMA to consider.

8. CASE STUDY: PUTTING ROMA INTO PRACTICE IN ZAMBIA

The World Vision team in Zambia wanted to make better use of their work at community level to inform policy. They analysed the context and stakeholders, then used aspects of the ROMA process, including identifying an objective, identifying outcomes including developing progress markers, generating entry points to intervene (strategy development) and assessing internal capacity to do so.

Developing an objective

Child health was identified as a priority area. The team visited two communities, where it worked to facilitate a number of focus group discussions using a list of 34 questions prepared under four headings (child health, awareness, access and coverage). A short summary encapsulated the various discussions that took place, noting the following issues:

- Long distance from health centre;

- Very few qualified health personnel;

- Low-level understanding of prevention of parent-to-child transmission;

- Immunisation preventing diseases that lead to child mortality (e.g. measles, polio, chickenpox) thereby keeping children healthy;

- Strengthening health care system at the community level: this would require training community-based health care workers and establishing a referral system with rural health care centres and district medical officers;

- Nutrition: government should formulate deliberate policies to encourage the integration of nutrition into health service provision.

Through discussion, participants agreed that a 'high prevalence of childhood diseases' was the most important issue the team should address. Drawing on the 'five whys' technique, the team was asked to answer the following questions: 1) why is this issue important? 2) who is it a problem for? 3) how are government, donors and civil society responding to the issues? 4) what needs to change and how? and 5) what evidence do we have and need to collect to inform policy development on this issue?

Several recommendations were made, including:

- Improve the citizen voice and (downward) accountability mechanism at local level for better delivery of health care (e.g. between local government and health care centres and between health care centres and the community).

- Increase government grants to health care centres.

- Improve salaries, housing allowances and transport provision for health care workers.

- A key criterion when prioritising recommendations was whether the issue needed to be taken forward at a national level. After further discussion, the team decided to work on 'improving accountability mechanisms at the local (district) level and promoting better and more participation in the delivery of local health care services'.

Identifying outcomes

Participants were asked to develop actor-specific outcomes, and found this a challenging process. Initially, they favoured phrases such as 'improve policy implementation, or policy formulation'; after some coaching, they tended to specify in greater detail, coming up with phrases such as 'the minister of youth, sport and child development proposes a bill to parliament to develop a policy on vulnerable children'.

Table 5 lists the outcomes identified for different priority actors.

Table 5: Progress markers

Actor(s)	Expect to see	Like to see	Love to see
UK Department for International Development (DFID) social protection advisor Priority outcomes: 1 (attitudes) 7 (behaviour change)	To participate in impact mitigation thematic group meetings, read our position paper	To see DFID advance our cause in their policy engagement with Ministry of Sport, Youth and Child Development (MSYCD) and Ministry of Finance and National Planning (MFNP)	DFID to provide active support and put pressure on MSYCD and MFNP to formulate national Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) Policy
National AIDS Council (NAC) impact mitigation committee Priority outcomes: 4 (change in discourse) 6 (change in policy content)	To participate in the proposition of the OVC Policy	To see NAC at the forefront championing the OVC Policy	Active support from NAC in drafting the OVC Policy
Parliamentary Caucus on Children (PCC) Priority outcomes: 4 (change in discourse) 8 (networks) 6 (change in policy content)	Propose and influence formulation of the OVC Policy among their peers	To see the committee champion the formulation of the OVC Policy	Active support from the PCC in engaging other stakeholders on the OVC Policy
MFNP director of budgeting Priority outcomes: 1 (attitudes) 5 (procedures)	Relationship built with MFNP; director of budgeting becomes aware of the situation of OVC	To see director of budgeting being more aware and appreciative of the OVC issues	To provide the financing framework and support for policy implementation

Developing a strategy

Participants worked through the force field analysis, which resulted in the following table.

Table 6: Progress markers

Description of possible intervention	Influence on the force (1-5)	Positive — Description	Positive — Influence on the change (1-5)	Change	Negative — Influence on the change (1-5)	Negative — Description	Influence on the force (1-5)	Description of possible intervention
	4	NAC better placed with policy issues of HIV and AIDS/OVC	4	Active support from NAC in drafting the OVC Policy	5	Not final authority on matters of policy	1	
	1	Financial resources	3		4	Limited financial resources	1	
Raise awareness through the media for public engagement	3	Public demand	2		3	Lack of proper collaboration between MSYCD and NAC	2	World Vision will facilitate a meeting between NAC and MSYCD on issues to do with OVC
Share best practices and OVC policies from other countries with government	3	Civil society organisations	3		4	Resistance from government to formulate a policy focusing on OVC alone	3	Share best practices and OVC policies from other countries with government

Assessing internal capacity

The team worked through Table 7, which outlined their capacity to implement a specific activity, what capacity was needed, what actions were required to meet those capacity needs and who would be responsible for doing so.

Table 7: Capacity and resource assessment

Activity	Resource available (staff, funds, time etc.)	Capacity need	Actions required to secure new competencies, skills, alliances etc.	Person responsible
Commission a study to generate evidence on the situation of OVC in the communities	Funds, staff to manage and review	Need for more financial resources, packaging of evidence	Recommend to World Vision UK to engage external organisation for further capacity-building in evidence packaging Generate concept papers for funding the study	X
Working with community radio stations to run a series of live discussions programmes on OVC issues	Funds, staff and time and links to other experts	Need for more financial resources	Generate concept papers for the radio programme	Y
Produce and distribute flyers about the need for the OVC Policy during the Day of the African Child	Funds, staff to facilitate the celebrations	Need for more financial resources to produce flyers	Generate concept papers for the production of flyers	X

Conclusion

The World Vision team in Zambia found that generating the information to intervene in the most appropriate and relevant way was not a linear process. A step often required information they did not yet have, which meant doing additional work on a previous step. Often, the team found it had to move to the next step before it had a complete understanding of the current one. The key message was to use the approach flexibly to fit within the constraints presented by the context and the problem at hand.

3

From M&E to monitoring and learning

"Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?" said Alice.

"That depends a good deal on where you want to get to," said the Cat.

"I don't much care where–"

"Then it doesn't matter which way you go"

Alice in Wonderland by Lewis Carroll

Lewis Carroll points to an important consideration when embarking on a learning exercise: if we want to prove or improve our work then we need to be able to describe clear intentions to direct our learning. We need to care where we are going. Without clear intentions, we are at liberty to define success in any way we like. This may sound appealing to some but is more likely to result in repetitive circles than learning.

The impact of academic research is traditionally evaluated via peer review to assess quality, relevance and accuracy; and citation analysis to assess uptake and reach. While both of these are important, neither helps us discover what influence the research may have had on policy (assuming it had an intention to do so), whether the research was worth undertaking and hence how to make it more effective. All we learn is how to make our research more attractive to other researchers!

Traditional M&E approaches – which rely on a simple feedback model with predefined indicators, collecting data and assessing progress towards pre-set objectives – are simply not adequate in the context of policy-influencing interventions. As explored in Chapter 1, many of the results we are looking for cannot be projected ahead of time in a linear fashion. The reality of the distributed capacities, divergent goals and uncertain change pathways that pervade many policy contexts means measuring progress along a predefined course is insufficient for monitoring.

Effective M&E requires a careful combination of sensing shifts in the wider context (policy, politics, economics, environmental, social), monitoring relationships and behaviours of diverse actors, weighing up different sources of evidence, being open to unexpected effects and making sense of data in collaborative enquiry. This kind of monitoring may seem challenging but it doesn't have to be. ROMA aims to shift the emphasis from evaluation and more to 'sense-making' of monitoring information. This fits into current management practices to ensure decisions on responding to an unpredictable situation are evidence-based and widely owned.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a practical monitoring approach that builds reflective and evaluative practice into the work of influencing policy, to support decision-making and demonstrate progress. The chapter is split into three: the first part describes why and what to monitor; the second introduces practical options for embedding and carrying out this kind of approach; and the third studies how to make sense of learning and decision-making. The principles that underlie this approach can be summarised as:

Appropriate to purpose, scale and context. In ROMA, the primary driver for monitoring is the users and how they will use the data and insights. But scale and context are also determinants. A small-scale intervention will require much lighter monitoring than a long-term, multi-strategy intervention. (If you are not sure of the scale of the intervention at this stage, Chapter 2 will guide you through the planning process.) As with context, simple problems will require only routine monitoring and performance management, whereas problems exhibiting one or more signs of complexity will need more sophisticated, responsive and multi-purpose monitoring systems. (If you are unsure about the level of complexity, Chapter 1 will introduce you to three clear signs to look for.)

Defines realistic results within the sphere of influence. The influence of an intervention has a definite limit based on resources, time, reach, politics etc. Beyond the sphere of influence is the sphere of concern, which is where the results that really matter lie (such as better education, quality health care, secure livelihoods). However, you have to rely on others to influence these results. ROMA considers only results within your sphere of influence. These are the ones that can be measured and can guide strategy and engagement. The planning stages in Chapter 2 as well as the monitoring areas and measures in this chapter are used to define the intervention and its sphere of influence. They point to the priority areas to monitor.

Focuses on actors and graduated change. Much policy-influencing work revolves around people. It follows that monitoring policy influence should also revolve around people. In ROMA, an intervention is monitored through its effect on key stakeholders – those people or organisations within the sphere of influence of the intervention and whom the intervention seeks to influence directly or indirectly. ROMA recognises that effects can come in many guises and it is important to be able to pick up a broad spectrum – the simple, immediate responses that show you are on the right track as well as substantive commitments that indicate you are close to your goal.[10]

Reasoned judgement about statistical significance. ROMA is an inductive approach that seeks to generate evidence that can be used to increase our understanding of our effect on policy. It does not seek to determine a statistical, numerical measure of policy influence.

10. This is an adaptation of the concepts of 'boundary partners' and 'progress markers' in OM.

Embeds learning in practice. ROMA has two key strategies to keep it focused on learning: it builds on systems and practices that already exist; and it balances ongoing data collection with discrete studies. This data collection, with specific enquiries to cover the depth or breadth required, can be carried out by the intervention team but also commissioned from specialist researchers or evaluators.

Building on collaboration and engagement. Policy-influencing is an inherently collaborative exercise. It often requires bringing together a range of expertise and perspectives on a problem, building close relationships with influential people. ROMA is especially useful in this context as it helps teams learn together through shared monitoring priorities and opportunities for learning. The greater the engagement with key stakeholders, the greater the opportunity to collect and use meaningful data. However, ROMA is just a tool and doesn't achieve anything alone: that depends on the effort and commitment that users put into it.

1. WHAT TO MONITOR AND WHY

Monitoring for learning and accountability

Broadly, the purposes behind M&E are usually viewed in terms of learning (to improve what we are doing) and accountability (to prove to different stakeholders that what we are doing is valuable). But we need to be more specific. Below is a list of nine purposes[11] that summarises different motivations and uses of M&E. Each will involve different elements of learning and accountability in a way that recognises the importance and interconnectedness of both rather than setting them in competition with each other. The first five purposes pertain to managing the intervention; the last four could be part of the intervention itself as strategies that directly contribute to the overall goal.

List of nine learning purposes

1 **Being financially accountable:** proving the implementation of agreed plans and production of outputs within pre-set tolerance limits (e.g. recording which influencing activities/outputs have been funded with what effect);

2 **Improving operations:** adjusting activities and outputs to achieve more and make better use of resources (e.g. asking for feedback from audiences/targets/partners/experts);

3 **Readjusting strategy:** questioning assumptions and theories of change (e.g. tracking effects of workshops to test effectiveness for influencing change of behaviour);

4 **Strengthening capacity:** improving performance of individuals and organisations (e.g. peer review of team members to assess whether there is a sufficient mix of skills);

5 **Understanding the context:** sensing changes in policy, politics, environment, economics, technology and society related to implementation (e.g. gauging policy-maker interest in an issue or ability to act on evidence);

6 **Deepening understanding (research):** increasing knowledge on any innovative, experimental or uncertain topics pertaining to the intervention, the audience, the policy areas etc. (e.g. testing a new format for policy briefs to see if they improve ability to challenge beliefs of readers);

7 **Building and sustaining trust:** sharing information for increased transparency and participation (e.g. sharing data as a way of building a coalition and involving others);

8 **Lobbying and advocacy:** using programme results to influence the broader system (e.g. challenging narrow definitions of credible evidence);

9 **Sensitising for action:** building a critical mass of support for a concern/experience (e.g. sharing results to enable the people who are affected to take action for change).

11. The nine purposes originate from Irene Guijt's work (see Guijt, 2008).

There are two very practical reasons for considering these learning and accountability purposes. First, making the purposes explicit directly links monitoring to the programme objectives and makes it clear to everyone involved why monitoring is important. This may be about informing stakeholders what is being done and what the effect is in order to sustain support for the intervention, or it could be to improve the ability of the team to effect the desired change. If this link is not clear then motivation for monitoring will likely decrease and it will be difficult to maintain participation and quality.

Second, each purpose will have different information requirements, different times and frequencies at which information is needed, different levels of analysis, different spaces where analysis takes place and information is communicated and different people involved in using the information. Clarifying the learning and accountability priorities can help thread these elements together to form a monitoring system embedded in existing organisational practices.

Table 8 presents a set of questions that can help decide the priority learning and accountability purposes. It also suggests possible users of the monitoring information gathered for each purpose. This helps when thinking through who needs to be engaged and what specifically they will need. Table 9 is a tool you can use for planning your monitoring by indicating the priority purpose(s) and describing where and when information is needed and who needs to be involved. The next step is to decide what information is required; this is described in the next section.

Table 8: Prioritising users and uses for monitoring information

Purpose	Key questions	Example users
Being financially accountable	Is money being spent where it was agreed it would be spent? How does the funder define value for money?	People involved in managing, governance, funding
Improving operations	Are activities being implemented according to plan? Is there a need for improving or redesigning activities? Is immediate feedback available?	People involved in managing, implementing
Readjusting strategy	Are strategies leading to expected short-term changes? Are short-term changes leading to expected longer-term changes? Is the selection of key stakeholders still relevant and viable? Are the objectives still appropriate?	People involved in managing, governance
Strengthening capacity	Is the team working effectively? Does the team need new skills for effective implementation? Are new systems or processes required?	People involved in managing, supporting implementation
Understanding the context	Is the intervention operating in a particularly unstable context? How is the external political, economic or organisational context changing? To what extent will these changes affect the intervention?	People involved in managing, in implementing; partners and stakeholders
Deepening understanding (research)	Do you have sufficient evidence to back up influencing activities? Are there parts of your theory of change you are unsure about or don't have enough knowledge on? Are you experimenting with innovative interventions?	People involved in managing, in implementing
Building and sustaining trust	Are there strategic partnerships, networks or coalitions that need building? Is there information that can be shared that will help this?	Partners, allies and stakeholders
Lobbying and advocacy	Is there a need to influence policy outside the core policy objective – e.g. on research process, forms of evidence, viable interventions?	General public, specific audiences, partners and allies
Sensitising for action	Is there a need to build critical mass around this issue and enable others to support you in influencing?	General public, specific audiences

Table 9: Template for prioritising learning and accountability purposes

Short description of the policy-influencing goal and outline strategy

Purpose	Priority	What information is needed?	Who will use information?	When and where is information needed?
Being financially accountable				
Improving operations				
Readjusting strategy				
Strengthening capacity				
Understanding the context				
Deepening understanding (research)				
Building and sustaining trust				
Lobbying and advocacy				
Sensitising for action				

Each of the purposes listed above will require different types of information about the intervention and its environment. For example, 'financial accountability' will require accurate information about the quality and quantity of what has been done and the resources used; 'understanding the context' will entail knowing about the people in charge of the policy area and their incentives; and 'strengthening capacity' will need information about performance of team members and partners, and the competencies required for the intervention.

Monitoring for strategy and management

As well as monitoring for learning and accountability, monitoring also helps you ensure you remain headed in the right direction. There are six levels at which you can monitor:

- Strategy and direction (are you doing the right thing?)

- Management and governance (are you implementing the plan accurately and efficiently?)

- Outputs (do the outputs meet required standards and appropriateness for the audience?)

- Uptake (are people aware of, accessing and sharing your work?)

- Outcomes and impact (what kind of effect or change did the work contribute to?)

- Context (how does the changing political, economic and organisational climate affect your plans?)

For each of these levels, there are different measures you could consider monitoring. The full range of measures is presented below: for each of the levels, the measures are presented in a rough order of priority. You will probably already be working with many of them, but it is useful to go through the list below to see whether there are others you may need to consider.

Strategy and direction

For many people working to influence policy, the choice of interventions will depend on the theory of change. Many start by making their theory of change explicit. This not only helps ensure a sound strategy in the first place, but also enables regular review and refinement at a strategic level. Practically, it helps identify key areas for monitoring and baseline data collection. Regardless of how a theory of change is presented, it can be assessed by questioning the following features:

1 How the theory describes the long-term change that is the overall goal of the intervention: is the desired long-term change still relevant?

2 How the theory addresses context: Is the strategy still appropriate for the context? Has the context changed significantly: does the strategy need to change?

3 The assumptions about how change may occur at any point in the theory, and about the external factors that may affect whether the interventions have the desired effects: are the assumptions about policy change holding true? Has anything unexpected happened?

4 How the theory assesses the different mechanisms that could affect the long-term change: is the assessment of the mechanisms affecting policy change still valid?

5 What interventions are being used to bring about long-term change? Is there the right overall mix of interventions? Are the interventions having the desired effect, demonstrating movement in the right direction?

Management

Management monitoring can be simplified down to recording what is being done, by whom, with whom, when and where. A systematic record of engagement activities can help make sense of the pathways of change later on.

Management monitoring can also involve assessing whether the most appropriate systems are in place, the best mix of people with the right set of skills are involved and the intervention is structured in the most effective way. This is particularly important when strategic policy-influencing introduces new ways of working for an organisation. Included in this is the regular assessment of the monitoring and decision-making processes themselves.

1 Management and governance processes: how do organisational incentives help/hinder policy-influencing? Is learning from the team leading to improved interventions? Is the team working in a coordinated, joined-up way?

2 Implemented activities: what has been done? When and where was it done? Who was involved?

3 The mix of skills within the team: given the strategy, what capacity/expertise needs to be developed or bought in?

4 Capacity or performance of individual team members: how are team members, contractors and partners performing at given tasks? What difference has training/capacity-building made?

Outputs

Outputs are the products of the influencing intervention and communication activities. Policy briefs, blogs, Twitter, events, media, breakfast meetings, networks, mailing lists, conferences and workshops are all potential outputs.

It is not enough to just count outputs: quality, relevance, credibility and accessibility are all key criteria that need to be considered.

1 Quality: are the project's outputs of the highest possible quality, based on the best available knowledge?

2 Relevance: are the outputs presented so they are well situated in the current context? Do they show they understand what the real issue is that policy-makers face? Is the appropriate language used?

3 Credibility: are the sources trusted? Were appropriate methods used? Has the internal/external validity been discussed?

4 Accessibility: are they designed and structured in a way that enhances the main messages and makes them easier to digest? Can target audiences access the outputs easily and engage with them? To whom have outputs been sent, when and through which channels?

5 Quantity: how many different kinds of outputs have been produced?

Uptake

Uptake is what happens after delivering outputs or making them available. How are outputs picked up and used? How do target groups respond? The search for where your work is mentioned must include more than academic journals – for example newspapers, broadcast media, training manuals, international standards and operational guidelines, government policy and programme documents, websites, blogs and social media.

Other aspects to consider include the amount of attention given to messages; the size and prominence of the relevant article (or channel and time of day of broadcast); the tone used; and the likely audience.

Secondary distribution of outputs is also important. The most effective channels may be influential individuals who are recommending the work to colleagues or repeating messages through other channels: it is important to capture who they are engaging with and what they are saying. Finally, direct feedback and testimonials from the uses of your work should be considered.

The following are the results areas for uptake:

1 **Reaction of influential people and target audiences:** what kind of feedback and testimonials are you hearing from influential people? How are they responding to your work?

2 **Primary reach:** who is attending events, subscribing to newsletters, requesting advice or information?

3 **Secondary reach:** who are the primary audiences sharing your work with and how? What are they saying about it?

4 **Media coverage:** when? Which publication(s)/channel(s)/programmes(s)? How many column inches/minutes of coverage? Was it positive coverage? Who is the likely audience and how large is it?

5 **Citations and mentions:** who is mentioning you and how? For what purpose: academic, policy or practice?

6 **Website/social media interactions:** who is inter-acting with you? What are they interested in?

Outcomes

Monitoring the outcomes you seek is an integral part of ROMA. You should have already set out the outcomes as part of the process of finalising your influencing objective, as outlined in Chapter 2. Refer back to Table 2, Step 2 in Chapter 2 for the discussion of nine possible outcomes to monitor and the different measures you can use to assess them.

Context

External context is the final area to consider for monitoring. This is important to ensure the continued relevance of the interventions chosen. By this stage, you should be abreast of the shifting politics in your field of work: the agendas and motivations of different actors, who is influencing whom and any new opportunities for getting messages across. You should also be aware of new evidence emerging, or changing uses or perceptions of existing evidence, as well as the wider system of knowledge intermediaries, brokers and coalitions to use. Chapter 1 introduced three dimensions of complex policy contexts: distributed capacities, divergent goals and narratives and uncertain change pathways. Here are the areas to monitor for each.[12]

When distributed capacities define the context, it is helpful to monitor:

1 **The decision-making spaces:** when, where, how are decisions being made? How are they linked?

2 **The policy actors involved:** who are they? What are their agendas and motivations? How much influence do they have? Who are they influencing? How are they related formally or informally?

When divergent goals and narratives define the context, it is helpful to monitor:

1 **Prevalent narratives:** what are the dominant narratives being used to define the problem? Who is pushing them and why? What opportunities do they offer?

2 **Directions for change:** what are the different pathways already being taken to address the problem and (how) are they aligned to others?

When uncertain change pathways define the context, it is helpful to monitor:

1 **Windows of opportunity:** are there any unexpected events or new ideas that can be capitalised on? Is there anything that can provide 'room for manoeuvre'?

12. Note the division between the three types of problem is not strict and it may be helpful to consider all five points.

3
From M&E to monitoring and learning

How to use the measures

These individual measures should be treated as a menu from which to choose when developing an M&E plan. Table 9 is the key table to fill in:

- List those measures you are already monitoring (ask yourself: are you monitoring them in sufficient detail?)

- Identify another three or four measures you would like to monitor.

- Use this expanded list to populate the cells in Table 9, identifying which measures will help you meet each of the nine learning and accountability purposes. For example, the quality and quantity of outputs may be used to demonstrate financial accountability (you have spent the money on the outputs you said you would produce), improving operations (you produced them in a timely fashion) and deepening understanding (they represent a significant advance in your knowledge of the issue).

- Look across the table to identify any gaps; if the gaps are significant (i.e. the story of your intervention cannot be told properly), refer back to the list of measures above to work out how to fill them in. Choose the measures that match your intervention and the desired changes they are contributing to.

2. HOW TO MONITOR – COLLECTING AND MANAGING DATA

Part 2 looks at the different tools and approaches for collecting and managing the information needed. This is broken down into two types of method:

1 Methods to be used in real time for managers and practitioners to collect data throughout the process: these generally relate to output, uptake and more immediate outcome measures, as they tend to be more tangible and observable.

2 Methods more oriented towards the more intermediate and longer-term outcome measures: these require more time and are generally used retrospectively.

Real-time data collection methods

Generally, if the intervention is very brief and engagement with individuals is very limited (e.g. through the broadcast media), the data for collection will be thin and may need to be supplemented with data from discrete studies. The deeper the engagement, the more in-depth will be the information you can collect in real time – and the more important these methods will become. Here are some of the methods.

Journals and logs

One of the most basic ways of capturing information is by keeping a journal of observations, trends, quotes, reflections and other information. Logs are usually quantitative and simple – number of people attending an event or airtime during a radio show. Journals are more descriptive, and either structured with a specific format and fields to be filled in (such as progress against predefined measures or changes in contextual factors) or unstructured, allowing the author to record comments. They can be notebooks carried by team members or electronic (website, database, intranet, email or even mobile apps).

Examples include ODI's 'M&E log', which all staff members can contribute to by sending an email to a particular inbox, which then stores the information on the institute's intranet. The unstructured approach makes it very easy for staff to submit evidence of uptake of research outputs and feedback from audiences but does require effort to maintain, systematise and use.

Regular journals work well with small teams but become more challenging with larger teams. Oxfam GB introduced journals to its Climate Change Campaign Team as part of its M&E system to enable systematic documentation of the day-to-day monitoring that happens naturally. As the team expanded it became unwieldy to manage regular analysis of the journals, so the approach was modified. Staff now fill in the journals during their monthly team meetings.

The Accountability in Tanzania programme collects journals from its 20-plus partners, each reporting on the outcomes of up to 8 different actors, to understand their influence at national and local level in Tanzania. It asks for journals to be submitted only twice a year and has developed a database to organise the information, enable analysis and identify patterns.

After action review

The US Army developed after action reviews as a technique for debriefing on a tactical manoeuvre. They have been adapted to organisational use and are commonly applied as part of a learning system. An after action review is typically used after an activity has taken place, bringing together the team to reflect on three simple questions: what was supposed to happen, what actually happened and why were there differences? They are designed to be quick and light – not requiring a facilitator, an agenda or too much time – and collect any information that might otherwise be forgotten and lost once the event passes. Therefore, they should be included as part of the activity itself and scheduled in right at the end. Like a journal, notes from the meeting should be filed away and brought out at the next reflection meeting.

A variation on the after action reviews is an 'intense period debrief', developed by the Innovation Network in the US as a method for advocacy evaluations. The richest moments for data collection in any policy-influencing intervention are likely to be the busiest – such as when mobilising inputs into a parliamentary committee hearing or responding to media attention. Data collection methods should adapt to this. The intense period debrief unpacks exactly what happened in that busy time, who was involved, what strategies were employed, how the intervention adapted and what the outcomes were, without interrupting the momentum of the intervention.

Surveys

Surveys can be useful for obtaining stakeholder feedback, particularly when interventions have limited engagement with audiences. They are most appropriate for collecting data on uptake measures, since this is about reactions to and uses of intervention outputs. Surveys can also be used for outcome measures, but timing has to be considered, since outcomes take time to emerge. If a survey template is set up prior to an intervention, it can be relatively quick and easy to roll out after each event or engagement. This could be automated with an online service like SurveyMonkey – you just provide the link to your audiences.

Web analytics

Since more and more interventions used in influencing policy are web-based, it is important to have a strategy for collecting information about use of web services: what is being seen, shared and downloaded, when and by whom. Website analytics are generally easy to set up, with services like Google Analytics providing free data collection and management.

Nick Scott at ODI offers good advice[13] on tracking a range of statistics, including webpages, publication downloads, search engine positioning, RSS feeds, Twitter, Facebook, mailing lists, blogs and media mentions. For each of these there are specific online tools recommended for collecting data. Once set up, these data services will run in the background and data can be collected and analysed when needed. Nick also describes the use of dashboards for compiling and visualising the data from multiple sources for analysis and use in decision-making.

Web analytics need to be used modestly and cautiously, however. They will never be able to replace the other data collection methods mentioned above; for example, they will never tell you exactly who is reading your work, who they work for, what their job is and what, if anything, they will do with it after they have read it.

13. http://onthinktanks.org/2012/01/06/monitoring-evaluating-research-communications-digital-tools/

Retrospective study methods

The real-time methods are unlikely to provide much data and insights at the outcome level. For this, you will need either to set aside time and undertake your own retrospective study or to commission a specialist to investigate for you. Either way, the following methods and approaches are useful to consider, as they are oriented towards the kinds of outcomes discussed in Chapter 2 and set out in Table 2.

Stories of change

A story of change is a case study method that investigates the contribution of an intervention to specific outcomes. It does not report on activities and outputs but rather on the mechanisms and pathways by which the intervention was able to influence a particular change, such as a change in government policy, the establishment of a new programme or the enactment of new legislation. The change described can be an expected change that the intervention was targeting or an unexpected change – which itself can be positive or negative with respect to the original objective. Stories can also describe how an intervention has failed to influence an expected change, in which case they analyse the possible reasons why.

There are three major steps to writing a story of change:

1 Choosing the story: this is usually prompted by the emergence of a success (or failure), through any of the data collection methods described above.

2 Gathering the evidence: to really understand the contribution of the intervention and provide a plausible argument, you will most likely have to find additional information. This will involve interviewing key stakeholders and programme staff to trace the influence of your work and identify the mechanisms leading to change. This should also involve an element of substantiation of claims that the intervention has had an influence, for example by consulting experts in the field or those close to the change.

3 Writing the story: stories should be relatively short (two to four pages), written as a narrative that is easy to read and leaves an impression. It should make a clear case for the intervention: describe the situation or the challenge it was responding to and how it intended to engage; explain who was doing what, when and to what effect; and discuss success or failure factors and any lessons for future interventions. Depending on the primary learning purpose, different emphases can be placed on different elements.

Stories of change are used in ODI as part of an annual review of the work of the institute. Researchers are encouraged to submit stories of the impact of their work to an annual competition, with the best published in the annual report and presented at the annual staff retreat. CAFOD, Tearfund, the Canadian International Development Agency and the UK Department for International Development (DFID) also use stories of change or case studies for understanding policy influence.

Episode studies

Another case study method relates to episode studies, which look at the different mechanisms leading to a change. These are not systematic assessments of how much each factor has contributed to the change but they are very labour- and evidence-intensive. The steps are the same as for stories of change except that the evidence-gathering stage investigates any and all factors influencing the change, including but not limited to the intervention. This generally requires access to those close to the decision-making around the change in question. The advantage of this approach is that it can highlight the relative contribution of the intervention to the change in relation to other influencing factors and actors.

Bellwether interviews

The bellwether method was developed by the Harvard Family Research Project to determine where a policy issue or proposed change is positioned on the policy agenda, the perceptions of key actors and the level of traction it has among decision-makers. It involves interviewing influential people, or 'bellwethers', including elected representatives, public officials, the media, funders, researchers/think-tanks, the business community, civil society or advocates.

The method is similar to other structured interview techniques but with two important differences. First, at least half of the sample should have no special or direct link to the policy issue at hand. This will increase the likelihood that any knowledge will owe to the intervention rather than personal involvement. Second, bellwethers should be informed of the general purpose and topic of the interview but not be given specific details until the interview itself. This will ensure their responses are authentic and unprompted. The interview should start by being general and gradually become more specific.

Box 12: Sample bellwether questions (from Coffman and Reid, 2007)

1. Currently, what three issues do you think are at the top of the [state/federal/local] policy agenda?

2. How familiar are you with [the policy of interest]?

3. What individuals, constituencies or groups do you see as the main advocates for [the policy]? Who do you see as the main opponents?

4. Considering the current educational, social and political context, do you think [the policy] should be adopted now or in the near future?

5. Looking ahead, how likely do you think it is that [the policy] will be adopted in the next five years?

6. If [the policy] is adopted, what issues do you think the state needs to be most concerned about related to its implementation?

7. Currently, what three issues do you think are at the top of the [state/federal/local] policy agenda?

8. How familiar are you with [the policy of interest]?

9. What individuals, constituencies or groups do you see as the main advocates for [the policy]? Who do you see as the main opponents?

10. Considering the current educational, social and political context, do you think [the policy] should be adopted now or in the near future?

11. Looking ahead, how likely do you think it is that [the policy] will be adopted in the next five years?

12. If [the policy] is adopted, what issues do you think the state needs to be most concerned about related to its implementation?

System or relational mapping

When the outcomes desired are related to how a system operates – for example building relationships between actors, shifting power dynamics, targeting the environment around which a policy is developed or improving information access or flows – then it can be useful to map that system to see how the different parts fit together. The data required for this are relational (i.e. to do with relationships, connections and interactions) rather than attributes (i.e. to do with facts, opinions, behaviour, attitude). They are usually collected through standard techniques such as surveys, interviews and secondary sources. By asking about the existence and nature of relationships between actors, a very different picture emerges of what the system looks like. This can be easily turned into a visual map to help identify patterns and new opportunities for influencing.

One particular method is NetMap, an interactive approach that allows interviewees to use physical objects and coloured pens to describe relationships between actors and their relative influence on a particular issue. It can be a useful variation if the aim is to gain perspectives across a system or network.

Another variation is influence mapping, which asks specifically about the influence one actor has on the opinions and actions of another. An influence map can show the primary and secondary (and if needed tertiary) influences on a key decision-maker. This can help in planning or adapting influencing strategies or identifying possible individuals to consult for a bellwether interview.

3. MAKING SENSE OF LEARNING AND DECISION-MAKING

Data need interpreting and making sense of. This part of the guide looks at the concept of sense-making and how monitoring systems can be fit for your purposes.

Sense-making is the process by which data are turned into actionable insights by subjecting them to beliefs and values, existing theory and other evidence. This can happen consciously through structured causal analysis with explicit parameters and questions. It also happens unconsciously through the social interactions and the periodic reflections that make up a natural working rhythm. Ideally, you need to be able to harness both for learning and accountability purposes.

Making space for sense-making

Sense-making can take place in spaces and have particular rhythms. Spaces are the formal and informal meetings and events that make up the everyday life of organisations and programmes. Rhythms are the patterns and structures in time through which an organisation can direct, mobilise and regulate its efforts. Examples include annual reports, monthly team meetings, quarterly board meetings, end-of-project reports, independent evaluations, field trips, stakeholder consultations, phone calls with partners, weekly teleconferences, email discussions with peers and impromptu conversations. Each of these has different purposes (therefore different information needs); different rhythms and timing (therefore different levels of detail required); and different people involved (therefore different perspectives to draw on).

Sense-making can operate at the macro or micro level. The macro level relates to questions about strategy and the external context, looking at broad patterns and knowledge that can be applied elsewhere. At the micro level, the questions are about this particular intervention and these particular actors, and how to improve what is being done. Different spaces will have a different balance of micro and macro. Our monitoring system should make room for both kinds of sense-making in the appropriate spaces and maintain the balance between looking immediately ahead and looking to the horizon.

Designing monitoring for sense-making

An effective monitoring system will identify the spaces and rhythms that already exist and weave them together with a common framework to provide structure for learning and reflection. ROMA provides such a framework; this is one of the major strengths of the approach. By walking a team through the development of a theory of change grounded in analysis of the context and system dynamics, ROMA provides a common language and schema that can be applied (explicitly or implicitly) within the sense-making spaces. For example, ROMA helps define the key stakeholders and the outcomes surrounding them that are important for the policy objectives. This can help greatly in identifying patterns from data by narrowing down where to look and what to look for.

It is important that sense-making is not constrained dogmatically to any framework, as this could mean important unanticipated changes are missed. Actions can have three broad effects: expected and predictable (e.g. you invite someone to a meeting and they turn up); expected and unpredictable (e.g. at some point after the meeting they remember what you were saying and recommend your work to a third party); and unexpected and unpredictable (e.g. that third party then shares your findings and claims credit for themselves). Your intervention will in reality engage with all three types of effect at the same time. Monitoring should be open to each of these, although it is usually the unpredictable effects that require the most attention from sense-making. The unexpected effects are trickiest to identify but often yield the richest learning. By structuring informal sense-making and employing formal causal analysis you can deal with these effects and ensure the right kind of data is supplied at the right time.

Practices for informal sense-making

Informal sense-making happens all the time – we notice things, judge them, weigh them and assign value and significance to them. But it predominantly happens as a social process when interacting with colleagues or partners or struggling with a report. Monitoring can help make informal sense-making more systematic and conscious, and better linked to decision-making. The following practical tips can help make the most of these moments.

Establish a common language

ROMA provides structure to sense-making by establishing monitoring priorities and signposting where to look for outcomes. The process of deciding key stakeholders to influence and developing the intended outcomes for each is extremely advantageous. It provides a common language for a team to use when making observations and weighing up the importance of information – and to know what you should be making sense of. It also provides a schema on which to base conversations – even, at a very practical level, an agenda for a review meeting. To enable quick and responsive sense-making, it can be good practice to frame outcomes in terms of key stakeholders' behaviour.

Example: consider stakeholder outcome measure 1 (see Table 2, Step 2, Chapter 2) 'attitudes of key stakeholders to get issues onto the agenda'. When using this measure for monitoring, you might create an indicator like 'governing party officials have positive attitude to tackling [issue]'. But how will you know their attitude has changed? A better indicator would describe what you would see if their attitudes were changing so when you see it you know it is significant. So you might use this instead: 'governing party officials request evidence on [issue]' or 'governing party officials make speeches in favour of tackling [issue]'.

Another practical tip is to ask these three questions for each piece of information collected:

- Does this **confirm** our expectations?

- Does it **challenge** our assumptions?

- Is it a complete **surprise**?

These questions will quickly help you decide what to do with that information. If it confirms, then use it as evidence to strengthen your argument, but it may indicate your monitoring is too narrow and you need to consider broader views. If it challenges, then review your assumptions and strategies and consider if the intervention is still appropriate. If it is a surprise, then take time to consider its implication and whether the context is changing.

Draw on a variety of knowledge sources

To identify and understand unexpected effects, you need to be open to diverse sources of knowledge and not be constrained to a narrow view of what is happening. This means drawing on multiple sources of data but also diverse perspectives for making sense of these data. This might mean creating spaces that bring in different perspectives, for example inviting 'critical friends' into reflection meetings, discussing the data with beneficiaries to seek their input or searching for studies in other fields that shed light on what is going on.

One particular approach that specifically seeks to do this is the Learning Lab developed by the Institute of Development Studies. The Learning Lab is a three-hour structured meeting with participants invited because of common knowledge interests rather than common experiences (this means the meeting is not confined to a project team as such). The meeting is structured around four questions: what do we know, what do we suspect, what knowledge and practice already exist and what do we not know or want to explore further? An important aspect is a 20- to 30-minute silent reflection that allows all participants to think through what they already know or have heard or seen about the chosen topic. Participants are asked to draw on their practical experiences, including literature, discussions and observations.

Use visual artefacts

Visualising data can greatly improve our ability to spot patterns and form judgements. But it can also take a lot of time and effort to produce meaningful graphs from a stack of data. Dashboards can help with this by automatically combining data from multiple sources and displaying it in a predefined way. Dashboards can be real-time, although this requires custom software or strong programming skills; or they can be produced on demand, but this requires more time and effort. ODI has developed a dashboard that can track all kinds of analytics in real time using a data aggregator called QlikView. The ODI Communications Dashboard brings together website and social media statistics, impact log entries, media hits and more in one visual report than can be filtered by output or programme.

A simpler alternative to a dashboard is a traffic light system to alert you to events that require attention. For example, you might use a stakeholder database to track information on voting patterns in parliament. A quick way to make sense of this information would be to assign a colour to each stakeholder depending on how they are voting (green = as expected, yellow = unexpected but probably doesn't matter, red = unexpected and will affect our programme).

Relational data, such as who has been meeting with whom or who has shared your work with whom, can be visualised on a network map. This will allow for filtering and clustering of relationships to uncover patterns and understand the dynamics of policy communities.

Practices for formal causal analysis

Some instances may require a more structured enquiry than informal sense-making. Formal causal analysis is a critical part of a learning system and can be conducted internally or externally (e.g. through assessments, reviews, evaluations or research studies). Practitioners and evaluators alike can use a few techniques for policy-influencing interventions.

Compare with the theory: process tracing

One of the most plausible ways to understand causes in complex contexts is to compare observations with a postulated theory.[14] For example, our theory says if we train junior parliamentary researchers to interpret and use scientific evidence they will use these skills to better advise parliamentary committees, which in turn will draft more appropriate and effective bills. In this example, each stage can be tested by comparing the data on what the researchers did after their training, and the subsequent decisions of the committees they are working with, with the effect expected. It is then possible to confirm or rule out particular causal claims.

This is the basis of process tracing, a qualitative research approach used to investigate causal inference. Process tracing focuses on one or a small number of outcomes (possibly involving a process of prioritisation to choose the important ones) to verify they have been realised (e.g. a policy-maker makes a decision in line with recommendations). It then applies a number of methods to unpack the steps by which the intervention may have influenced the outcome. It uses clues or 'causal process observations' to weigh up possible alternative explanations. There are four ways clues can be tested:

'Straw-in-the-wind' tests: when a straw seems to be moving, it lends weight to the hypothesis that there is wind but it does not definitively rule it in or out (e.g. we sent our report to the policy-maker but do not know if it got to them).

'Hoop' test: a hypothesis is ruled out if it fails a test (e.g. was the report sent to them before the decision was made?)

'Smoking gun' test: seeing a smoking gun lends credence to the hypothesis that it was used in a crime but is not definitive by itself (e.g. we see our report on the desk of the policy-maker but don't know if they have read it).

'Double decisive' test: where the clue is both necessary and sufficient to support the hypothesis (e.g. we observe precisely the same language in the decision of the policy-maker as in our recommendations).

14. Step 3, Chapter 2 describes steps for developing a theory of change.

Check timing of outcomes

A strategy that can help determine causal inference is laying out all the outcomes in a timeline to demonstrate the chronology of events. If you also place the intervention activities and outputs on the timeline then you can begin to establish causal linkages, visually applying the test that effect has to follow cause. This can eliminate many competing claims about causal inference and help narrow down the important ones. There may also be timings inherent in the theory of change, so this can also be used to judge the plausibility of contribution.

The RAPID Outcome Assessment approach has been used to determine the contribution of research to policy change. In RAPID Outcome Assessment, a timeline is mapped of milestone changes among pre-determined target stakeholders alongside project activities and other significant events in the context of the intervention. A workshop is convened with people close to the intervention and the changes described. Participants work through each of the changes observed and use their knowledge and experience to propose the factors that influenced them (which could be the intervention or other factors) and draw lines between the different elements of the timeline.

Figure 8 is a timeline developed to analyse the Smallholder Dairy Project in Kenya, a research and development project that aimed to use findings to influence policy-makers. The analysis, based on the ROA approach, identified the key actors setting and influencing policies affecting the dairy sector in Kenya. It then used interviews to find significant behavioural changes in these actors, triangulating them in a stakeholder workshop. This resulted in a set of linkages between the changes and key project milestones as well as external events.
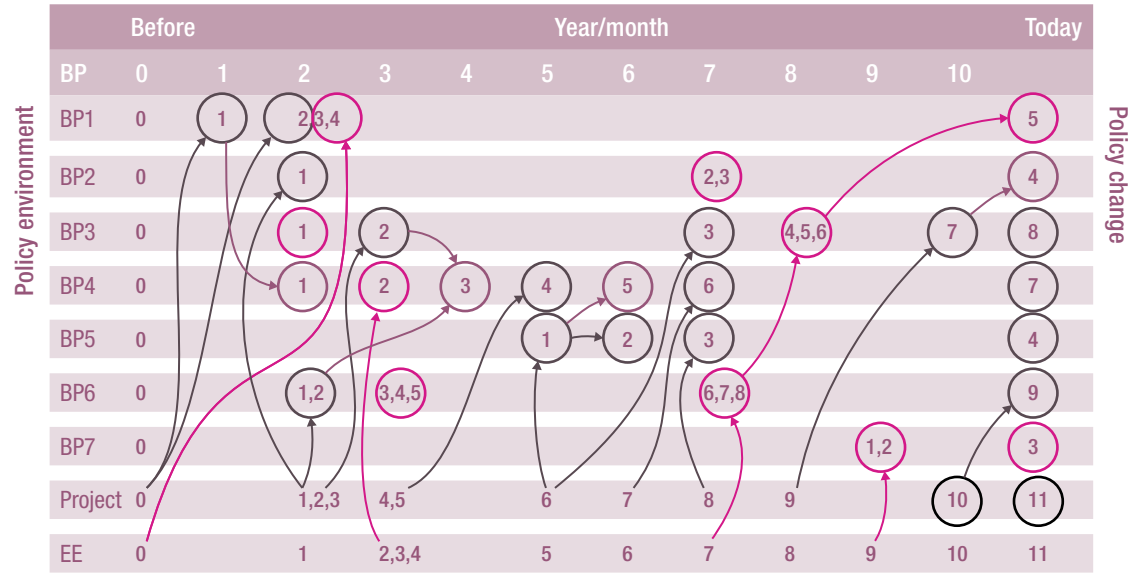

Figure 8: Example of timeline showing changes observed in seven key stakeholders (BP1-7), project milestones and external environment (EE) for Smallholder Dairy Project, Kenya (from ODI, 2012)

Investigate possible alternative explanations

All the approaches described above share a commonality: they all look beyond the intervention for possible contributing factors. It is fairly obvious that, when working in open systems, we are rarely the sole actor trying to influence outcomes. It is vital, then, that whatever contribution is made is placed in the context of all the other actors and factors operating in the same space. Investigating alternative explanations can help gauge the relative importance of the intervention, but can also help narrow down hypotheses to test if alternatives can be ruled out – which can strengthen the case for intervention contribution.

This is the basis of most theory-based evaluation approaches. It is the core purpose of the General Elimination Methodology developed by Michael Scriven, which systematically identifies and tests 'lists of possible causes' for an observed result of interest. As well as collecting data about the intervention, the study collects data about other possible influences so as to either confirm or rule them out.

The General Elimination Methodology was used in an evaluation of a public education campaign to end the juvenile death penalty in the US. The campaign, funded with $2 million from a collaboration of foundations, ran for nine months from 2004 to 2005 during a US Supreme Court hearing to review a number of cases of juvenile offenders facing the death penalty. On 1 March 2005, the Supreme Court ruled that juvenile death penalties were unconstitutional. The evaluation sought to determine to what extent the campaign influenced this decision.

Following the General Elimination Methodology, the evaluation started with two primary *alternative* explanations: 1) that Supreme Court justices make their decisions entirely on the basis of the law and their prior dispositions rather than being influenced by external influences; and 2) that external influences other than the final push campaign had more impact.

The evaluation gathered evidence through 45 interviews, detailed review of hundreds of court arguments and decisions and legal briefs, analysis of more than 20 scholarly publications and books about the Supreme Court, news analysis, reports and documents describing related cases, legislative activity and policy issues and the documentation of the campaign itself, including three binders of media clips from campaign files. Through all this evidence the evaluators were able to eliminate sufficiently and systematically the alternative explanations to arrive at an evidence-based, independent and reasonable judgement that the campaign did indeed have a significant influence on the Supreme Court decision.

4. SUMMARY

This chapter started out with the aim of providing practical advice for people working to influence policy to build reflective and evaluative practice into their work to support decision-making and demonstrate progress.

Part 1 introduced nine 'learning purposes' – the overarching reasons for undertaking any kind of M&E activity that should drive the design and use of M&E. It proposed 35 individual measures for policy-influencing interventions across six categories (strategy, management, outputs, uptake, outcomes and context), and suggested how these could be used for the learning purposes.

Part 2 discussed how data could be collected both in real time, as the intervention is being carried out, and in retrospect, through detailed studies.

Finally, Part 3 turned to the important task of making sense of those data and putting them to use in decision-making and demonstrating impact.

Since the theme of the chapter has been evaluative practice, it is apt to conclude with a few final pointers on good practice:

1 Put use at the heart of your monitoring, evaluation and learning to make sure any enquiry will have a positive contribution.

2 Be grounded in theory from the beginning and test each stage as you go.

3 Consider competing theories so as not to close down unintended effects.

4 Embrace failure as just as good an opportunity to learn from as success.

5 Invest in your monitoring and learning in proportion to the scale of your intervention: sometimes it is appropriate to use simple measures.

6 Be conscious of rhythms and spaces in which learning occurs: it happens at different paces and different levels.

Finally, there is a traditional African proverb that encapsulates the attitude to take when developing M&E systems for policy influence: 'we make our path by walking it'. Start by looking at what people are already doing, where data are already collected and the spaces that already exist for sense-making, and then work to strengthen and support those. If existing patterns are ignored, efforts may be wasted because people will always drift towards the familiar and the easy.

Summary: putting ROMA into practice

As this guide shows, ROMA is a constantly evolving set of tools and techniques, brought together to help improve both engagement in and influence on policy, programming and practice. Over the past decade, the RAPID team at ODI has built on OM's key principles to design, adapt and refine ways in which researchers and practitioners can begin to influence public policy and practice. This evolution continues, but for now it is useful to summarise the core messages from each chapter in this guide for the different types of people we believe will read this book.

The aim of this guide is for different audiences to read this guide in different ways and take away different messages. Clearly, each problem requiring policy influence is unique, and the context within which you attempt to apply the ROMA approach will be unique to that problem, and may well change over time. There will be some situations where ROMA may not be appropriate – in a consultancy situation where there is a clearly defined process and set of outputs, or where interaction with governments needs to be highly structured. ROMA is best used where there is some degree of flexibility on both sides.

1. TEAM LEADERS IN RESEARCH AND PRACTICE ORGANISATIONS

Take a whole-project approach

ROMA's main message is to consider policy engagement an integral part of the research or implementation process. Clearly, it is important that any attempts to engage or influence are based on robust evidence: for research projects and programmes in particular there is a tension between wanting to wait until the results are conclusive before communicating them, and wanting to engage during the life of the programme to be assured of a receptive audience when the results do emerge. Using ROMA, you should be able to mix the two approaches, communicating throughout the life of your project so your stakeholders are aware of what may emerge and are able to consider possible responses.

Chapter 1's framework for diagnosing the issues you are facing not only will not help structure your engaging and influencing strategies but also may help you refine what you do and whom you work with to bring about change.

Chapter 2's workshop-based approach will help you decide whom to involve at what stage of the process to ensure your work is as cost-effective as possible.

Chapter 3's templates have been designed so the information you collect on your progress fits seamlessly into the way you manage your projects and programmes, and enables you to report effectively to donors. They will also ensure you can streamline the learning that happens (from both successful and unsuccessful influencing attempts) into your work planning and team management.

Jump to Chapter **1**

Jump to Chapter **2**

Jump to Chapter **3**

2. M&E SPECIALISTS

Emphasise learning

ROMA's approach links monitoring to ongoing learning, not just to evaluation. In the face of complex problems, the ubiquitous phrase 'M&E' can be unhelpful: unpredictability means it is impossible to rely on initial planning to guide your work; instead, ongoing monitoring must inform project adjustments. Of course, evaluations are a key part of any project or programme, and the requisite information must be collected so that, when they are done, they are robust. ROMA suggests shifting the emphasis so more weight is given to 'sense-making' of monitoring information, fitting it into current management practices to ensure decisions about how to respond to an unpredictable situation are evidence-based and widely owned.

Chapter 3 clarifies why we monitor, as the three pressures from donors (demonstrable impact, value for money and the need to address very complex development problems) can overwhelm monitoring systems. It may require a little initial effort to design the systems, but this will pay off in the long term as information collection becomes more focused on supporting the decisions that will need to be taken and less on collecting it just in case it might be useful.

Chapter 1 shows why ROMA shifts the emphasis from 'M&E' to 'M&L' (monitoring and learning). The nature of complex problems means the ability to adapt is often key, and this chapter helps you decide on what and with whom ongoing learning needs to occur.

Chapter 2 will help you develop a monitoring and learning system that is broadly based and widely owned. Complex development problems are likely to involve many stakeholders, and the workshop tools suggested in this chapter will bring them together around a shared vision for the project or clarify where there is disagreement and divergence. It will ensure the learning process does not ride roughshod over those with weaker voices.

3. RESEARCHERS AND PRACTITIONERS

Check your assumptions

People in the thick of implementing a project or conducting a piece of research may sometimes find it hard to step back from their work to consider what else could be done, or how to do things differently. The danger is of proceeding without testing assumptions about whom to collaborate with, what to do or how to communicate the evidence emerging from the work.

Chapter 1 will help you do just that, giving you a structured way of thinking about the issue you are working on, exploring the root causes and getting at a clear diagnosis that may affect the way you conceive of the issue and thus how you work on it. Clearly, work programmes cannot be thrown up in the air as soon as you notice a change in the wider context, but it is important to reflect on how those changes will affect the wider ramifications of what you are doing.

Chapter 2 gives you a set of practical tools that will help bring your partners and other stakeholders into this assumption-checking process. Although the workshops are not designed specifically to do this, they offer a space for you to reflect – with your collaborators – on what you are doing and whether there is anything any of you could do more, or differently, to promote sustainable change.

Chapter 3 shows why monitoring should not be left just to the specialists: it is not enough to continue with the work programme you initially defined and hope an external evaluator will mark you highly. Monitoring needs to be a whole-team process, which everyone understands and to which everyone contributes.

4. COMMUNICATION SPECIALISTS

Emphasise internal as well as external communications

Good communications are a central pillar of the ROMA process. Achieving policy influence, particularly in complex policy environments, relies heavily on ensuring messages are well communicated in the right language to the appropriate audiences when they need them. The challenge for communicators is to ensure these audiences include people internal to the project or programme as well as those outside.

Chapter 2 shows why this is the case and helps you develop a strategy: ROMA's workshop-based approach brings diverse stakeholders together. Maintaining good communications between them needs to happen for the life of your project or programme.

Chapter 1 reveals the importance of good communications and helps you focus on the key communication challenges. Communicating the nature of the problem you are facing is a key part of understanding what to do and how to do it; the more complex the problem, the more important effective, multi-directional communication is. Internal communications are as important as external communications, ensuring the project team shares this understanding will help to build links between the project and its wider stakeholders.

Chapter 3 will help you build a communications strategy that is constantly informed by the latest monitoring evidence. The larger the project or programme, the more important it will be for specialist communicators to be included in monitoring processes to ensure learning is as widely shared as possible.

5. POLICY-MAKERS AND CIVIL SERVANTS

ROMA can be used within policy-making

As noted in the Introduction, policy-makers could use the ROMA toolkit to improve their own strategies for changing policy or practice within their departments or ministries. Where issues cut across departmental boundaries or where it is important to engage a variety of external stakeholders, the ROMA principles and toolkit have even more to offer.

Chapter 1 shows that, for large cross-cutting issues, diagnosing the challenges faced may give you a set of different ideas about whom to engage with and how.

Chapter 2 sets out some useful tools you can use to map your own stakeholders, understanding where you might be able to use outsiders (such as researchers or non-government organisations) to help reinforce your position. It also helps you consider more closely what outcomes you might be seeking.

Chapter 3 provides insights into how your own policies can be monitored and how to draw learning from them effectively. Discussing the principles and practices in Chapter 3 with your delivery organisations will help you come to a good shared understanding of how to prioritise what you need to monitor, with the resources you have, to give you the picture of how effective your policies and programmes are.

6. DONORS AND RESEARCH COMMISSIONERS

Acknowledge complexity and its implications for monitoring and learning

Donors recognise the challenges of working in complex situations and welcome multiple approaches to solving them. However, this does not always translate well into the nature of the impacts they seek, which can over-emphasise the delivery of outputs according to predefined plans and under-emphasise the importance of adaptation and learning.

Chapter 1 shows the importance of diagnosing the complexity of a policy issue, and the three key aspects that need to be considered when designing projects and programmes to bring about policy change. Not all issues are complex, but it is important to ensure the tools and techniques used to design, implement, monitor and learn from strategies for policy influence are appropriately tailored to the nature of the issue at hand.

Chapter 2 shows why it is important to encourage those implementing projects and programmes to allow sufficient time for broad engagement throughout, not just at the beginning. This has resource implications: workshops are not cheap, but internal communications within messy partnerships are essential if everyone is to be able to contribute appropriately to broad-based sustainable development.

Chapter 3 shows why it is important to focus on learning when the goal is to influence policy change around complex problems. OM-based approaches to monitoring complement more traditional programme and project management techniques, helping unpick the behavioural assumptions that often weaken theories of change (particularly between output and outcome levels in a logframe). To cope better with complexity, it would be helpful for donors to drop the term 'M&E' from the donor lexicon, changing the emphasis to M&L, and seeing evaluation as a separate issue.

Chapter 1: Diagnosing the problem

Resources on the drivers of policy change

The following sources provide models for understanding policy and institutional change, each grounded in various empirical studies and literature reviews. Taken as a whole, these not only provide various insights for those looking to influence policy but also show how the challenges facing those looking to influence policy are complex: capacities are distributed, interests and perspectives are divergent and change pathways are unpredictable. Each provides various prescriptions and suggestions for dealing with these challenges.

Booth, D. (2012) 'Development as a Collective Action Problem: Addressing the Real Challenges of African Governance'. London: Africa Power and Politics Programme. Available at: http://www.institutions-africa.org/filestream/20121024-appp-synthesis-report-development-as-a-collective-action-problem

Brown, V. (2007) 'Collective Decision-making Bridging Public Health, Sustainability Governance, and Environmental Management', in C. Soskolne (ed) *Sustaining Life on Earth: Environmental and Human Health through Global Governance*. New York: Lexington Books.

Delvaux, B. and Mangez, E. (2008) 'Towards a Sociology of the Knowledge–Policy Relation'. Knowledge and Policy Project funded by the European Commission within the Sixth Framework Program. Available at: http://knowandpol.eu/IMG/pdf/literature_sythesis_final_version_english.pdf

Jones, H. (2011) 'Taking Responsibility for Complexity: How Implementation Can Achieve Results in the Face of Complex Problems'. Working Paper 330. London: ODI. Available at: http://www.odi.org.uk/publications/5275-complex-problems-complexity-implementation-policy

Kingdon, J. (1984) *Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies*. Boston, MA, and Toronto: Little Brown and Company.

Sabatier, P. and Jenkins-Smith, H. (eds) (1993) *Policy Change and Learning: An Advocacy Coalition Approach*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Shaxson, L. (2009) 'Making Sense of Wicked Issues: Do Policy-makers Have a Suitable Toolkit?' Presentation to DEFRA.

Wilson, J. (1980) 'The Politics of Regulation', in J. Wilson (ed.) *The Politics of Regulation*. New York: Basic Books.

Resources on complexity and development

The following papers provide evidence and argument about the complexity of problems faced in development, why complexity matters and what can be done about it by governments, non-government organisations and aid agencies. Complex problems pose challenges for traditional models for policy and programming, but there has been a tendency to stick to these models despite these, causing various negative side-effects. Alternative approaches are available for dealing with each of these challenges and managing aid in a different way.

Andrews, M. (2013) *The Limits of Institutional Reform in Development: Changing the Rules for Realistic Solutions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Barder, O. (2009) 'Beyond Planning: Markets and Networks for Better Aid.' Washington, DC: CGD. Available at: http://www.cgdev.org/publication/beyond-planning-markets-and-networks-better-aid-working-paper-185

Baser, H. and Morgan, P. (2008) 'Capacity, Change and Performance'. Discussion Paper 59B. Maastricht: ECDPM. Available at: http://www.ecdpm.org/Web_ECDPM/Web/Content/Content.nsf/0/BD2B856F-58D93E5FC12574730031FD6F

Bhadwal, S. (2008) *Understanding Adaptive Policy Mechanisms through Participatory Irrigation Management in Maharashtra, India*. New Delhi: The Energy and Resources Institute.

Hummelbrunner, R. and Jones, H. (2013) 'A guide to planning and strategy development in the face of complexity'. London: ODI. Available at: http://www.odi.org.uk/publications/7325-aid-development-planning-strategy-complexity

Jones, H. (2011) 'Taking Responsibility for Complexity: How Implementation Can Achieve Results in the Face of Complex Problems'. Working Paper 330. London: ODI. Available at: http://www.odi.org.uk/publications/5275-complex-problems-complexity-implementation-policy

Natsios, A. (2010) *The Clash of the Counter-bureaucracy and Development*. Washington, DC: CGD. Available at: http://www.cgdev.org/publication/clash-counter-bureaucracy-and-development

Chapter 2: Developing an engagement strategy to influence policy

Andrews, M., Pritchett, L. and Woolcock, M. (2012) 'Escaping Capability Traps through Problem-driven Iterative Adaptation'. Working Paper 299. Washington, DC: CGD. Available at: http://www.cgdev.org/publication/escaping-capability-traps-through-problem-driven-iterative-adaptation-pdia-working-paper

This paper argues that many reform initiatives in developing countries fail to achieve sustained improvements in performance because governments and organisations pretend to reform by changing what policies or organisations look like rather than what they actually do. The authors propose an approach, Problem-driven Iterative Adaptation, based on four core principles, designed to contrast with standard approaches to promoting institutional reform.

Cassidy, C. (2013) 'Is it time to ban the term "dissemination"?'. LSE The Impact Blog, 19 August 2013. Available at: http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2013/08/19/is-it-time-to-ban-the-term-dissemination/

This blog argues that using 'dissemination' to describe what happens to research after it is completed has been mis-interpreted as linear one-way communication. Instead, researchers and communicators should take a take a far more active and engaged role in tailoring communications to suit the context, message and the audience.

Datta, A. (2011a) 'Lessons from Deliberative Public Engagement Work: A Scoping Study'. Working Paper 338. London: ODI. Available at: http://www.odi.org.uk/publications/6161-public-partcipation-engagement

This working paper draws practical lessons from processes in which members of the public have been involved in public engagement work. Public engagement is defined as those initiatives where members of the public have been recruited or invited to collaborate or engage in dialogue with scientists and other professional stakeholders through participatory or deliberative means. It includes lessons from work to 'democratise' science and technology (in the 1990s) in the 'developed' world and the long history of participation in expert-led development policies and programmes in the 'developing world'.

Datta, A. (2011b) 'Strengthening World Vision Policy Advocacy – A Guide to Developing Advocacy Strategies'. London: ODI. Available at: http://www.odi.org.uk/publications/5921-world-vision-policy-advocacy-strategies-guide

This 'how to guide' was developed by the RAPID programme at ODI for use by the staff in World Vision's national offices. It was intended as a reference guide for World Vision staff who wanted to develop an advocacy plan, and complements the training workshops delivered by the RAPID programme for staff from the Zambia and Uganda World Vision offices during 2010.

Datta, A. (2013) 'Developing Capacities in Complex Environments – Experiences from Vietnam'. Blog post, Supporting Think Tanks Series. Onthinktanks, 17 June. Available at: http://onthinktanks.org/2013/06/17/supporting-think-tanks-series-developing-capacities-in-complex-environments-experiences-from-vietnam/

This think-piece focuses on lessons from the implementation of a relatively large ($500,000) project funded by an international development organisation between 2009 and 2011, to provide capacity development services (a form of knowledge-brokering) to the Vietnamese Academy of Social Science.

Funnell, S.C. and Rogers, P.J. (2011) *Purposeful Program Theory*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

This book provides guidance on how to develop a programme of work that links an intervention (project, programme or policy) with its intended or observed impacts and how this can be used to guide M&E. It explains why and how to use and develop programme theory, and comes up with several examples and alternative approaches.

Green, D. (2013) 'The Limits of Institutional Reform in Development: A Big New Book by Matt Andrews'. Blog post. From Poverty to Power: How Active Citizens and Effective States Can Change the World, 13 May. Available at: http://oxfamblogs.org/fp2p/the-limits-of-institutional-reform-in-development-a-big-new-book-by-matt-andrews/

This post on Duncan Green's influential blog reviews a book by Matt Andrews called The Limits of Institutional Reform in Development: Changing Rules for Realistic Solutions – similar to the working paper cited above.

Harris, D. (2013) 'Applied political economy analysis: a problem-driven framework' London: ODI. Available at: http://www.odi.org.uk/publications/7380-applied-political-economy-analysis-problem-driven-framework

This sets out the key stages of carrying out a political economy analysis and the specific questions one should ask oneself at each stage in a tabular format.

Jones, H., Jones, N., Shaxson, L. and Walker, D. (2012) *Knowledge, Policy and Power in International Development: A Practical Guide*. Bristol: The Policy Press. Available at: http://www.odi.org.uk/publications/6408-knowledge-policy-power-international-development-practical-guide

This book presents an academically rigorous yet practical guide to efforts to understand how knowledge, policy and power interact to promote or prevent change. In particular, it gives readers the ability to develop strategies for negotiating the complexity of the knowledge–policy interface more effectively, so as to contribute to policy dialogues, influence policy change and implement policies and programmes more effectively.

Krznaric, R. (2007) 'How Change Happens: Inter-disciplinary Perspectives for Human Development'. Research Report. Oxford: Oxfam GB. Available at: http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/how-change-happens-interdisciplinary-perspectives-for-human-development-112539

This report presents an overview of approaches used to explain social change from a wide range of academic perspectives, from history, politics and economics to psychology and geography. These are summarised in a useful table, which presents a series of questions as a flexible tool for thinking about how change happens. The author argues that current development thinking uses only a narrow range of approaches to change and the result is that most development strategies are limited. There is a need for broader thinking about how change happens, so we can be more creative in devising strategies and more adept at facing the huge challenges that confront our societies and planet.

Lindquist, E. (2001) 'Discerning Policy Influence: Framework for a Strategic Evaluation of IDRC-supported Research'. Ottawa: IDRC. Available at: http://betterevaluation.org/resources/overview/discerning_public_policy

This paper surveys the academic literature to address questions about the impact of research in Southern contexts and aims to develop a conceptual framework that will guide a strategic evaluation of the policy influence of International Development Research Centre-sponsored projects.

Michaels, S. (2009) 'Matching Knowledge Brokering Strategies to Environmental Policy Problems and Settings'. Environmental Science and Policy 12: 994-1011.

This paper examines how six different knowledge-brokering strategies – informing, consulting, matchmaking, engaging, collaborating and building capacity – might be employed in responding to different types of environmental policy problems or policy settings identified in decision-aiding frameworks. Using real world examples, four frameworks are reviewed.

Shaxson, L. (2011) 'Improving the Impact of Development Research through Better Research Communications and Uptake'. Report from AusAID, DFID and UKCDS-funded workshop, London, 29-30 November. Available at: http://www.ukcds.org.uk/sites/default/files/content/resources/AusAID-DFID-workshop-background-paper.pdf

This is a background paper for the workshop on improving the impact of development research through better research communication and uptake, which was held in London on 29 and 30 November 2010. The paper draws on and synthesises a number of documents on this topic produced for the UK Department for International Development, as well as other documentation and events of interest. The paper begins with a brief review of the different terms that are in use, before drawing from the developed and developing world literature to outline various models that have been proposed to improve the impact of research on policy-making. Having briefly reviewed the various models, the paper identifies a series of questions the workshop addressed. The final section reviews some even more recent discussions on the roles and functions of knowledge intermediaries; a group of people and organisations increasingly seen as important contributors to improving the impact of research.

Stackowiak, S. (2007) 'Pathways for Change: 6 Theories of How Policy Change Happens'. Seattle, WA: Organisational Research Services.

This brief lays out six theories grounded in diverse social science disciplines and worldviews that have relevance to advocacy and policy change efforts. The brief is not meant to be comprehensive; rather, it introduces and illustrates theories and approaches that may be useful to advocates, funders and evaluators.

Start, D. and Hovland, I. (2004) 'Tools for Policy Impact: A Handbook for Researchers'. London: ODI. Available at: http://www.odi.org.uk/publications/156-tools-policy-impact-handbook-researchers

This handbook provides a comprehensive selection of tools that can be used when attempting to turn research into policy influence.

Weiss, C. (1977) 'Research for Policy's Sake: The Enlightenment Function of Social Research'. Policy Analysis 3(4): 531-545.

This paper shows that government decision-makers tend to use research indirectly, as a source of ideas, information and general orientation, more than as problem-solvers of specific issues. Further, an 'enlightenment' model for research is supported that views research as providing the intellectual background of concepts, orientations and empirical generalisations that inform policy. Thus, as new concepts and data emerge from research, their gradual cumulative effect can be to change the bases out of which policy-makers operate.

Young, E. and Quinn, L. (2012) *Making Research Evidence Matter: A Guide to Policy Advocacy in Transition Countries*. Budapest: Open Society Foundations. Available at: http://www.icpolicyadvocacy.org/sites/icpa/files/downloads/policy_advocacy_guidebook_-_making_research_evidence_matter_-_young_and_quinn_2012_0.pdf

This note provides guidance on how to take key insights learned through research and analysis and feed them into the policy-making process to inform or influence decision-making. Put another way, the focus of this manual is on effective policy advocacy that is firmly grounded in evidence and expert analysis.

Chapter 3: From M&E to monitoring and learning

Six relevant websites

1. **Research to Action** M&E portal	A portal for researchers working in international development including regular features, news, blogs and publications on M&E of research use.	http://www.researchtoaction.org/category/monitoring-and-evaluation
2. **LSE** Impact of Social Science Blog	A popular blog among the UK social science research community but gaining international renown across sectors because of its thoughtful discussions about the cutting edge of research communication, policy engagement and managing for impact.	http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/
3. **3ie** Policy Impact Toolkit	A practical online guide for impact evaluation researchers to plan and monitor their policy engagement; includes a large library of resources.	http://policyimpacttool-kit.3ieimpact.org/
4. **BetterEvaluation** Policy influence and advocacy theme page	A portal for advice on designing evaluations and monitoring systems and choosing methods; includes an innovative and highly practical framework.	http://betterevaluation.org/themes/policy_influence_advocacy
5. **Innovation Network** Point K	A long-running resource library for evaluators of advocacy and policy change interventions.	http://www.innonet.org/pointk
6. **OnThinkTanks** M&E of influence topic page	A blog with a range of opinions, tips and tools about M&E of influence, oriented to think tanks but widely applicable.	http://onthinktanks.org/topic-pages/topic-page-monitoring-and-evaluating-influence/

Ten guides and overviews relating to M&E of influence

The ten items below represent some of the most relevant guides and discussion pieces on the topic of monitoring and evaluating influence, covering the wide range of topics which are touched on in chapter 3. The chapter was based on Hovland (2007) and Jones (2011), which represent RAPID's earlier work on this topic, and delves into other areas.

Hovland, I. (2007) 'Making a Difference: M&E of Policy Research'. Working Paper 281. London: ODI. Available at: http://www.odi.org.uk/publications/1751-making-difference-m-e-policy-research

Jones, H. (2011b) 'A Guide to Monitoring and Evaluating Policy Influence'. Background Note. London: ODI. Available at: http://www.odi.org.uk/publications/5252-monitoring-evaluation-me-policy-influence

Two emerging areas of interest are M&E of advocacy and M&E of research uptake or impact. On the former, Barkhorn et al (2013), Coffman and Reid (2007), Reisman et all (2007) and Whelan (2008) provide useful discussions and practical tools.

Barkhorn, I., Huttner, N. & Blau, J. (2013) 'Assessing Advocacy'. Standford Social Innovation Review. Accessed online: http://www.ssireview.org/articles/entry/assessing_advocacy

Coffman, J. and Reid, E. (2007) 'Unique Methods in Advocacy Evaluation'. Cambridge, MA: Innovation Network. Available at: http://www.innonet.org/resources/node/390

Reisman, J., Gienapp, A., & Stachowiak, S. (2007) A Handbook of Data Collection Tools: Companion to "A Guide to Measuring Advocacy and Policy".

Whelan, J. (2008) 'Advocacy Evaluation: Review and Opportunities'. Innonet; Available at: http://www.innonet.org/resources/node/464

On the M&E of research uptake or impact, Barnet (2013) and DFID (2013a) are helpful. Lindquist (2001) is a very important piece for anyone evaluating policy influence and although it is from a research funder's perspective the theoretical grounding it provides is useful for all kinds of policy influence.

Barnett, C., Gregorowski, R. (2013) 'Learning about Theories of Change for the Monitoring and Evaluation of Research Uptake'. Brighton: IDS. Available at: http://www.ids.ac.uk/publication/learning-about-theories-of-change-for-the-monitoring-and-evaluation-of-research-uptake

DFID. (2013a). *How to note: Evaluating Influence*. DFID. Accessible online: http://advancefamilyplanning.org/sites/default/files/resources/HTN%20on%20Evaluating%20Influence%20March%202013.pdf

Lindquist, E. (2001) *Discerning Policy Influence: Framework for a Strategic Evaluation of IDRC-Supported Research*. Victoria, Canada: School of Public Administration. Available at: http://betterevaluation.org/resources/overview/discerning_public_policy

Finally, DFID (2013b) is a new how-to-note which covers a lot of the important considerations for evaluating (internally or externally) influence of any kind.

DFID (2013b). *Research Uptake: A guide for DFID funded research programmes*. London: DFID. Accessible online: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/200088/Research_uptake_guidance.pdf

Ten examples of M&E of influence

The following is a list of ten selected examples of monitoring and evaluation of influence. It covers a broad range of contexts, purposes and approaches. All of these examples demonstrate an approach aligned to that which is discussed in this chapter and which has either informed or applied the approach described.

Examples of evaluations:

Bayne, S. (2013) 'Evaluation of ODI's EDCSP Project'. Bristol: The Create Centre.

Beynon, P. et al (2012) 'What Difference does a Policy Brief Make?'. Brighton: IDS. Available at: http://www.3ieimpact. org/media/filer/2012/08/22/fullreport_ what_difference_does_a_policy_brief_ make__2pdf_-_adobe_acrobat_pro.pdf

Clarke, J., Mendizabal, E., Leturque, H., Walford, V., & Pearson, M. (2009) 'DFID Influencing in the Health Sector'. DFID Working Paper 33. London: DFID. Accessed online: https://www.gov.uk/government/ uploads/system/uploads/attachment_ data/file/67716/health-influencing.pdf

Leksmono, C., Young, J., Hooton, N., Muriuki, H., & Romney, D. (2006) 'Informal Traders Lock Horns with the Formal Milk Industry: The role of research in pro-poor dairy policy shift in Kenya'. London: ODI. Accessed online: http://www.odi.org. uk/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/ publications-opinion-files/154.pdf

Patton, M. (2008) 'Advocacy Impact Evaluation', *Journal of MultiDisciplinary Evaluation*, 5:9.

Examples of the design of M&E systems and processes:

Coe, J., & Majot, J. (2013) 'Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning in NGO Advocacy. Findings from Comparative Policy Advocacy MEL Review Project'. Washington, DC: Oxfam America. Available at: http://www.oxfamamerica. org/static/media/files/mel-in-advocacy- inquiry-executive-summary.pdf

Hamza-Goodacre, D., Jefford, S., & Simister, N. (2013) 'Supporting international climate negotiators: a monitoring and evaluation framework'. CDKN Working Paper. Accessed online: http://cdkn.org/ wp-content/uploads/2013/11/CDKN_ Working_Paper-ME-_Final_WEB.pdf

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